

the weekly Standard

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THE FINAL OBAMA SCANDAL

STEPHEN F. HAYES & THOMAS JOSCELYN

on how the administration
pushed a deceptive narrative
about the al Qaeda threat

BIN LADEN:
CONTACTS

FROM
ABU TAYYAB

AL QAEDA:
FINANCES

AL QAEDA-
IRAN TIES

BIN LADEN
CORRESP.



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COVER BY DAVE MALAN

Hallelujah, I'm a Bum

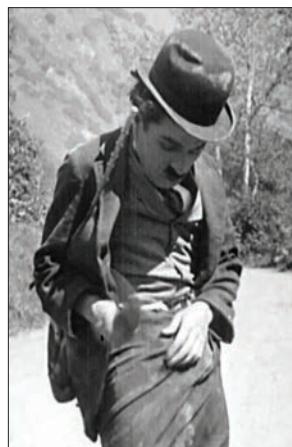
Should you find yourself strolling along Colorado's Boulder Creek, be careful where you step. It seems that no small number of homeless have taken up residence there, and not only are they in the habit of leaving trash hither and yon, so too waste of a more personal nature. "The conditions—feces and used toilet paper, in addition to heaps of litter and homeless property," writes the *Boulder Daily Camera*, "are not only off-putting, but have prompted concerns about sanitation in one of the city's premier spots for outdoor recreation."

An unpleasant situation, no doubt. But what caught THE SCRAPBOOK's attention was a different sort of sanitation altogether—the verbal sort. Though the word "homeless" has not yet been made verboten, it's only a matter of time, as it seems a new euphemism is gaining favor—the "unhoused." Thus, the *Daily Camera*

writes that "the unhoused and unsheltered who sleep in hidden spots along Boulder Creek are opting in certain cases to relieve themselves outdoors, to the chagrin of public officials and many visitors to the area."

One of those visitors is Alli Fronzaglia, the head of the Boulder Hiker Chicks club. She's hep to the newly correct lingo: "I'm very sympathetic to the situation with the unhoused community, and I don't want to demonize them," she says.

Thus is the natural progression of euphemism. A term describing something unpleasant comes to have, by association, unpleasant overtones. And so a new, untainted term—for example, once upon a time, *the homeless*—is found to avoid the unpleasantness. But soon enough the new term begins to take on the odor of the word it replaced and a shiny new euphemism must be found.



Charlie Chaplin,
little Unhoused Person

Not only is this silly, it's a shame, as the hunt for ever more bland and inoffensive terms for vagabonds denies us the rich and wonderful vocabulary the English language provides for the fellows.

Must we forgo such fine, direct, and descriptive terms as *idler* and *loafer*? Must we miss out on the specificity afforded us by our linguistic heritage? For example, there are *bums* and there are *stew-bums* (that is, bums who are on the sauce). Beggars might be not just *panhandlers* but *plingers*, *mumpers*, *spongiers*, and (thanks to Yiddish) *schnorrers*.

A bindle man carries all his belongings in a bundle. *A dosser* creeps about in low places looking for some place to sleep.

Go back to the 17th century and the terminology is as delightful as it is descriptive. *Jack-out-of-doors*—a vagrant. *Hedge-bird*—a scoundrel vagrant. *Bess o' Bedlam*—a lunatic vagrant.

Vagrancy may be a sad condition, but is it made any less sad by the empty correctitude of modern language? *Member of the unhoused community?* Should it ever come to that, THE SCRAPBOOK would rather be a tramp. ♦

Cigarette Fiend

Kim Jong-un's nicotine habit may yet be his undoing. That was the lesson from the defection, announced this week, of senior North Korean diplomat Thae Yong-ho.

Thae had been posted to London with his family, where they enjoyed the benefits of life in the West. Thae had a membership at a tennis club. His two sons attended local schools. They adapted readily to modern Western customs and norms, with not just a taste for uncensored media and Internet access, but an aversion to certain hateful practices common in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The boys, you see, found it hard to



defend the government their father represented. As the *New York Times* tells it, "Their English friends taunt

ed them with questions, like why Mr. Kim had smoked a cigarette inside a nursery." They had seen photos from

a 2014 North Korean press opportunity in which Kim, cigarette in hand, had visited a Potemkin orphanage. The right-thinking lads of London were appalled.

Never mind Kim's reign of terror with its purges and summary executions; never mind the peninsular gulag of forced labor camps; never mind the mass starvation of an oppressed population; never mind the cartoon-villain haircut; never mind the nukes.

No, what makes Kim a diabolical madman is that he smokes in an orphanage nursery. The horror! ♦

Trump Gets Clocked

Oh, no! Only 150 seconds to go. The lugubrious blowhards at the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* couldn't let all of the exciting anti-Trump activities of the president's first week go by without getting in on the act. As they like to do whenever they've been out of the news for too long, the *Bulletin* announced that their doomsday clock is now at two and a half minutes to midnight. Terrifying stuff, we're sure. Then again, how alarming can it be if we recall that

during the last years of Nobel Peace Prize-winner Barack Obama's tenure, the *Bulletin's* doomsday projection quivered at just three minutes away from Armageddon?

By the time you've read THE SCRAPBOOK, two and a half minutes are likely to have elapsed. So where's the end of the world? Are we being too literal-minded when we point out that a clock that's been stuck at a few minutes to midnight for most of the last 60 years isn't a particularly useful timepiece? ♦

Banner Week for Bores

The work of THE WEEKLY STANDARD was briefly interrupted last week when a handful of Greenpeace stuntivists mounted a crane on a



neighboring construction site, unfurled a banner, and then dangled in the air for several hours. Our office window had a perfect view of the pranksters as their banner folded in on itself, obscuring its message.

Still, it was difficult for THE SCRAPBOOK to perceive the point. The Greenpeace gesture attracted only modest attention on social media, and a few passersby paused to gawk and take photographs. The *Washington Post* did report that the high jinks "brought the construction of the new Fannie Mae headquarters to a halt," but that was not quite true: Work continued on the site adjacent to the protest. Of course, several hun-

dred office workers were prevented from getting to their jobs, several city blocks were barred to automobiles and delivery trucks, and a number of construction workers were reportedly sent home without pay. Greenpeace didn't so much make new friends as make a nuisance of itself.

Such disruptions have lately been commonplace in the nation's capital: The police will close streets and bar pedestrians so that the aggrieved can swarm, shriek, and vandalize. Marches are called daily for a host of unlikely causes. And especially since Donald Trump assumed the Oval Office, the streets of Washington have become an expanding stage



Protesters' banner
resists efforts to unfurl.

for political theater. In the past, such spectacles were largely confined to the White House, the Capitol, and the National Mall. Now it's citywide, a chronic urban annoyance like rats and cyclists.

THE SCRAPBOOK's hope, grounded in long experience, is that the silliness will soon subside. Other than the protest professionals on the George Soros payroll, people will man the barricades for only so long. In a prosperous democracy, the thrill of mass protest wanes—especially when gaudy acts of civil disobedience do little other than snarl traffic and dent the wages of the hardhat crowd. ♦

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NEWSCOM

02.22.17

DANA LOESCH

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A Crying Shame

A relative told me this story: She had gone to a neighbor's party, only to have the neighbor announce her arrival by saying something like, "You don't have to worry, everyone. She didn't bring the conservative with her." And then, after telling me the story, my relative began to weep—not because of her neighbor but because of me. My existence as a known conservative proved to be just too . . . *much*. An open wound. An invitation for neighbors to shame her.

Twitter and Facebook have been doing their best to convince us that incivility is the nation's beloved pastime, finally overtaking Trivial Pursuit and post-Thanksgiving indigestion on the list of traditional favorites. But I'm still surprised when it manifests itself in personal settings.

Not that a get-together of longtime neighbors is likely to be entirely free of politics. Modern urban districts tend to a uniformity of housing price, uniformity of price tends toward uniformity of social class, and social class these days often dictates an acceptable range of political views. Nibbling their canapés, sipping their wine, those urbanites could quite reasonably assume that their neighbors, sharing their class, would share their politics. But remarking loudly on a variation—announcing the social-class flaw of having a conservative relative—seems something previous generations might have labeled an impoliteness. With a raised eyebrow and perhaps even a setting-down sharply of a teacup.

I've treasured over the past few years a discussion I found on a leftist website about whether one should help victims of a car accident—if they were known to be Republicans. (After some back-and-forth, the commentators set-

tled on an answer: No. Better they die.) Even that, however, was a little abstract and impersonal. More on point was the libertarian blogger who used Obama's 2012 reelection to announce: "All family and friends, even close family and friends, who I know to be Democrats are hereby dead to me. I vow never to speak to them again for the rest of my life." And the rhetoric has only escalated in the years since, with the 2016 presidential race making ugly everything it touched.



This isn't new, of course. Look back through American history, and you'll find plenty of raucous elections. If Jules Verne's 1873 *Around the World in Eighty Days* is any guide, Europeans typically viewed 19th-century American elections as a cross between oratory and an all-in bout of pig wrestling.

The 1930s were scarcely better, and 1968 brought its own brand of nuttiness. But I still sense something new in the fetid air of politics. A certainty that those who disagree with us about ordinary political matters are not just mistaken but actually evil. Or stupid, maybe, if a kindler, gentler option is on the table.

Back in the mid-1990s, a senior academic told me, with great confidence, that the peak of political correctness had surely passed: A college like

Princeton would be embarrassed if it didn't have a single conservative on its faculty; a law school like Harvard's needed at least a token figure. With a whoosh, those times disappeared. The sheer presence of a known conservative is enough to cause agitation on a campus these days, and faculty collegiality cowers in the corner, afraid to show its face.

And out of academia the disease has spread. Politics seems so important—so vital, so all-consuming. For too many, it dictates whether art can be judged as good. For too many, it sweeps aside intellectual discipline and expertise. Everything except cat

videos is subject to political analysis, and a news story about a traffic accident quickly becomes an occasion for the readers to sling one another over whose political party allowed it or caused it to happen. No wonder people retreat to bubbles with their cats and cameras. It's the only chance to turn down the volume of the political wrangling.

Manners are easy to think minor when compared with the great causes of politics, particularly when political views are taken as a sign of social class and more—something akin to religion. We've just elected what may be the most ill-mannered man ever to run for president, as he campaigned against a candidate who has demonized her opponents perhaps more than any other person in modern politics. And that's possible only if manners don't much matter to anyone: right or left.

Maybe manners ought not to matter. But as I struggle to understand the small changes from which our current impasses were built, I keep circling back to that moment when, announcing loudly the existence of a relative with improper political views, a woman tried to shame her neighbor—and succeeded.

JOSEPH BOTTUM

Country First

The United States has had, prior to Donald Trump, 44 presidents. (Arguably we've had 43, but the guardians of historical pedantry long ago decreed that Grover Cleveland, who served nonconsecutive terms, would be counted as two.) There's no reason our descendants shouldn't enjoy at least another 44—and, one hopes, even more.

But there's also no reason to assume the American experiment in self-government will chug along forever, automatically and unproblematically. Abraham Lincoln commented in 1838 that if the experiment were to fail, the danger would "spring up amongst us. . . . If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen, we must live through all time, or die by suicide." Lincoln did not believe that destruction would be impossible. To the contrary, he was concerned in 1838 that we might be drifting toward such an outcome. "I hope I am over wary; but if I am not, there is, even now, something of ill-omen, amongst us."

Civil war came less than a quarter-century later.

Can we say there is nothing of ill-omen among us? We can't. For decades, our constitutional fabric has been weakened by many trends and various doctrines. Are the institutions that are needed to keep our free government robust as strong as they should be? They are not.

And now we have, not to put too fine a point on it, a talented demagogue as president. Demagogues have always been among us, and have always been understood as a threat to liberal democracy. They appeal to the people and claim to speak for the people. President Trump asserted in his inaugural address that "we are transferring power from Washington, D.C., and giving it back to you, the American people." Power to the people! What's not to like?

Well, as *Federalist 51* points out, "a dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions."

Two of those precautions—the first intended by the Founders, the other not—are the Constitution (and the reverence thereof) and the party system. Both serve to check the unbridled ambition of unscrupulous individuals, of demagogues. In a short piece published on Inauguration Day

(officially dubbed by our new president a "National Day of Patriotic Devotion"), Harvey Mansfield noted that Trump, "the declared enemy of the establishment, finds himself president by the agency of two of its institutions: the Republican Party that rallied to him and the Constitution [via its Electoral College] that saved him."

So the Republican party has a special obligation. Having rallied to him, Republicans have a particular responsibility to check their own chieftain when necessary. Others in the constitutional order have their own roles and duties, which they can be expected to play. Republicans, by contrast, will be under pressure to rally only and not to check.

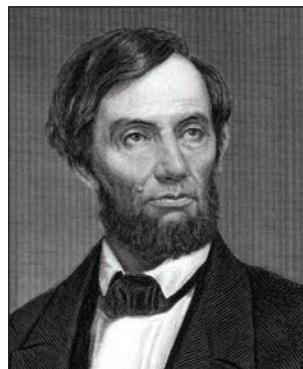
Rally they certainly should—and enthusiastically—when Trump administration policies are worthy. We trust there will be many such occasions. But check they must when the Constitution and the country require it. This of course isn't why most Republicans ran for office. It's not the primary reason other Republicans will have accepted positions in the new administration. Checking and correcting and challenging a Republican president are not likely to be well-received, at least at first, by Republican voters across the country.

No matter. It is a burden Republicans must bear. They and only they will be in a position, in some circumstances at least, to act to prevent demagogery from overwhelming deliberation, to stop willfulness and arbitrariness from replacing reflection and choice. Indeed, if they fail to take on this responsibility, it is not clear others could do so in their place.

But surely this is a burden not simply to be borne but to be embraced. Every party wants to claim that when the chips are down, it can and will act on behalf of the country. For the Republican party to stand successfully, where fitting and proper, both in private and if need be in public, against a Republican president would be an impressive accomplishment. It would be one not inferior to the Grand Old Party's previous achievements.

It was, after all, a recent Republican presidential candidate whose partisan slogan was "Country First." He had no chance to put such a promise into effect. Now Republicans have such an opportunity. And there are worse things to be remembered for than as a party that put country first.

—William Kristol



Price Takes a Beating

Senate Democrats savage Trump's HHS nominee.

BY FRED BARNES

Tom Price, President Trump's choice for secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), has the distinction of being a better fit for the department he's been picked to lead than any other Trump cabinet nominee. But this hasn't helped Price gain Senate confirmation.

Price, 62, is an orthopedic surgeon. He ran an orthopedic clinic for 20 years in Atlanta before returning to Emory University, where he had finished his residency, as an assistant professor of orthopedic surgery. He also ran a clinic at Grady Memorial, Atlanta's largest public hospital.

This background, while impressive, doesn't necessarily qualify him to be HHS secretary. But his knowledge of the entire health care industry—doctors, hospitals, insurance companies, makers of medical devices, pharmaceutical companies—does. Price, by the way, is not an apologist for the pharmaceutical industry.

All this was of no interest to Democrats on the Senate Finance Committee at a confirmation hearing last week. They concentrated on portraying Price as a sleazy member of Congress—he has chaired the House Budget Committee—who invested suspiciously in medical and pharmaceutical stocks and created conflicts of interest.

This was the ostensible reason used by Democrats for treating Price harshly. The real reason was political and partisan. Price was nominated by President Trump. For Democrats, that's poison enough. And he wants to repeal and replace Obamacare.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.



Indeed, Price has his own substitute plan. It has 84 House co-sponsors, more than any other proposed Obamacare replacement.

Price was also roughed up when he appeared before the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee a few days before Trump's inauguration. That committee doesn't have a vote on his confirmation—only the Finance Committee does—but Price appeared anyway. He probably wishes he had stayed away, given what happened.

Senator Elizabeth Warren is a member of that committee and she's an unhappy person. If Hillary Clinton had been elected, the Massachusetts Democrat would have been a powerful player, able to impose fierce new regulations on financial markets and banks. The day after Trump won, bank stocks soared, in part because she had been politically marginalized.

Warren took her ire out on Price. The issue was his purchase in 2016 of \$2,700 of stock in Zimmer Biomet Holdings, a manufacturer of medical devices. A week after the transaction, he introduced a bill that would stall the implementation of a regulation by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services that could hurt the company.

The bill went nowhere. But that wasn't the point of Warren's questioning. She was skeptical when Price insisted he wasn't responsible for buying Zimmer stock. His financial manager, whom he had assigned to handle his portfolio, made the purchase. And he wasn't aware of it until later, he said.

Warren wasn't satisfied. His manager "buys and sells stocks you want to buy and sell," she said. "That's not true, senator," Price responded.

"Well, because you decide not to tell them?" Warren said. "Wink, wink, nod, nod. And we're all just supposed to believe that?"

Democrats failed to nail Price on the Zimmer deal. Nor did they on the purchase of stock in Australian drugmaker Innate Immunotherapeutics. He bought that on his own before it was publicly traded. But he claimed he had no information that wasn't publicly available.

He was aided by Johnny Isakson, the chairman of the Senate Ethics Committee and a longtime friend. Isakson spoke on the Senate floor: "I feel like I have been asked to be a character witness in a felony trial in the sentencing phase of a conviction," he said. "There are things that have been said the last week or so to me that need to be refuted." He did his best to refute them.

Democrats didn't give up at that point. They are resourceful. They tried a few other tactics. One was to slow

the entire confirmation process for Trump's nominees, not just Price. This allows more time for something to turn up that jeopardizes a nomination. Stranger things have happened.

In Price's case, the vetting process, which includes a role for the Democrat-run Office of Government Ethics, took 35 days. The past two Democratic nominees for HHS secretary took half that time: 16 days for Kathleen Sebelius, 17 days for Sylvia Mathews Burwell. It's not difficult to get the drift here.

Then there were attacks on Price's health care plan. Democrats flinch at the thought of defending Obamacare because it's falling apart and unpopular besides. So they went after the Price plan instead. At a White House meeting, Trump told House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi that she will love the replacement to Obamacare, which is likely to be similar to Price's plan. Not likely.

This time, Pelosi thinks she knows what's in a health care bill before it's passed. "One of the proposals of the nominee for HHS, Mr. Price, was to give a \$3,000 tax credit," she said at a press conference. And she cited testimony before the Budget committee "that under his plan America's families would be subjected to a \$50,000 deductible, individual \$25,000 deductible." She wasn't kidding.

Those deductibles are preposterous. The Price plan does offer two separate tax credits, one to buy insurance, another for health savings accounts (HSA). "Under Obamacare, the typical 36-year-old woman who makes \$43,000 gets nothing," says the Hudson Institute's Jeffrey H. Anderson. "Under Price's plan, she'd get a \$2,100 tax cut and another \$1,000 tax cut for having or opening an HSA."

Brutal confirmations are nothing new. But Finance chairman Orrin Hatch said he'd never seen one as partisan as Price's. He escaped, a bit bruised but alive. Price promises to sell all his stock within 90 days after he becomes HHS secretary. There were no Republican senators in sight who might vote against him. Which means his chances of confirmation are about as good as they get. ♦

Seeing Pink

What were the women marching for?

BY CHARLOTTE ALLEN

The liberal explain-it-all website *Vox* said the Women's March on Washington on January 21 was possibly "the largest demonstration in U.S. history."

It was certainly big. Estimates of the number of attendees at the National Mall have ranged from a 500,000 number given by crowd scientists to a 1 million figure given by the march organizers—plus another supposed 4 million at sister protests around the



An 'unruly river of Pepto-Bismol' after all

world. It was also one of the strangest demonstrations in U.S. history, enveloped in oddity from its very beginning.

The nominal founder of the march, now enshrined in march mythology, was Teresa Shook, a retired lawyer in Hawaii who was so appalled by the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States that she invited her Facebook friends to join her in a protest of Trump's inauguration. In a flash she had 10,000 commitments, some from women who had already bought plane tickets to attend what they thought would be Hillary Clinton's inauguration. Shook's "Million Woman March," as she called it, seemed a perfect way

Charlotte Allen is a frequent contributor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

to get some value out of that airfare.

Then, in another flash, Shook got co-opted by Bob Bland (a woman, despite her name), founder of Manufacture New York, a Brooklyn-based "incubator" for designers of "sustainable" fashion. Bland had designed the "Nasty Woman" T-shirts that many Clinton supporters donned—with proceeds going to Planned Parenthood—after Trump bestowed that epithet on his opponent during the presidential race. Bland added paid staffers and, more crucially, financial support, from a range of sponsors. Planned Parenthood got top billing, with the title "Exclusive Premier Sponsor," but there were more than 400 others, including NARAL Pro-Choice America, EMILY's List, the ACLU, the American Federation of Teachers, the Human Rights Campaign, and MoveOn.org. Bland was now firmly in charge of the march.

No sooner had Bland installed herself at the helm than some black women-activists pointed out—quite correctly—that the march, like feminism itself, was a white women's creation. A post on the march's Facebook page accused the organizers of "appropriation," of stealing the very name, Million Woman March, from a 1997 protest organized by black women in Philadelphia and modeled after Louis Farrakhan's 1995 Million Man March in Washington. "I will not even consider supporting this until the organizers are intersectional, original and come up with a different name," the critic wrote.

Bland hastily changed the name to Women's March on Washington and added three co-chairs reflecting various colors of the diversity rainbow: veteran protester and gun-control advocate Tamika Mallory, alternatives-to-incarceration activist Carmen Perez,

and Linda Sarsour, a hijab-wearing Palestinian-rights agitator whose résumé includes organizing a group called Muslims for Ferguson and persuading New York City schools to close on Islamic holidays. Mallory, Perez, and Sarsour had earlier teamed up to co-chair another Ferguson-themed event, the 2015 March2Justice from New York to Washington in a protest against alleged police brutality.

More image trouble arose for the march in mid-January when it ejected one of its “partners,” an anti-abortion group called New Wave Feminists—because you can’t exactly extend the hand of sisterhood to abortion opponents when your chief sponsor is Planned Parenthood. A few white women expressed distress at what they perceived as the march organizers’ growing hostility to them. Bland had posted an admonition for white women to “understand their privilege” and pay more attention to “intersectionality”: the idea that minority women accumulate more points in the victim game than white women because of their twofer status as objects of discrimination. A blogger finger-wagged the whites: “Now is the time for you to be listening more, talking less.”

Then there was the matter of the bright pink “pussyhats.” The cat-eared caps and the patterns for knitting them were the Instagram-friendly brainchild of several L.A. women, including a knit-shop owner, distressed by the impending Trump presidency. The idea was to play on a vulgar remark involving the word “pussy” that Trump had uttered in 2005 and also, as one Southern California knitter put it, to be “reappropriating the word ‘pussy’ in a positive way.” As knitters clicked out tens of thousands of the hats with their needles, and ads for commercially produced versions pullulated on Etsy and elsewhere, *Washington Post* columnist Petula Dvorak worried that the feline headgear would make wearers look silly instead of serious: “an unruly river of Pepto-Bismol roiling through the streets of the capital rather than a long overdue civil rights march.” Citing such issues as equal pay and equal representation in corporate corner

offices, Dvorak begged the marchers to leave the pussyhats at home.

Her words went unheeded, as I discovered at the march’s official start on the south side of the National Mall, where it was more like a lake of Pepto-Bismol. There were not only thousands of bright pink hats but thousands of bright pink jackets, shirts, scarves, sneakers, socks, and shoelaces. A mother posed for a photo with her small daughter who sported a junior-size pussyhat and a poster reading “I Vote in 8 Years.”

Marchers were marching—or at least some of them were marching as they chanted “Not my president!” and other anti-Trump mantras. A great deal more of the protesters simply milled about or stood in line at an agglomeration of food trucks whose operators were among the dozens of entrepreneurs on the sidewalks ignoring a “Peace Over Profit” poster held by one of the demonstrators and putting capitalism to work peddling water bottles, rainbow flags, candy bars, and “Thank You Obama” T-shirts.

What the march seemed mostly to be about was self-expression via posters—but a peculiar sort of self-expression, oblivious to the impression that the marchers might be making on onlookers who didn’t share their ethos. The well-funded Planned Parenthood had printed up its own posters that said, not surprisingly, “I Stand With Planned Parenthood.” NARAL’s signs, also professionally designed, featured a cat emoji preceded by the words “Keep Your Laws Off My.”

But relatively few demonstrators seemed to want to carry the canned and relatively sedate slogans that the advocacy groups had prepared. They preferred to write and draw their own, with no holds barred. The word “nasty” appeared in many of the home-made signs: “Nasty Woman,” “You Haven’t Seen Nasty Yet,” “Stay Nasty,” and (on a poster held by a man) “I Like Women Extra Nasty.” The word “pussy” also got play: “I Grab My Own Pussy,” “This Pussy Has Claws.” Other demonstrators drew elaborate renderings of uteruses and fallopian

tubes. “Why RU So Obsessed With My Uterus?” a sign asked. There were several pinkish, purplish hats, neck-rings, and paintings that apparently represented vaginas. “My Gender Is a Dynamic, Not a Disorder,” a sign read.

The other thematic focus of the posters was the president himself: “No Trump-Pence.” “Trump Is Hitler.” “No Trump—No KKK.” “Putin’s Bitch.” And most colorfully: “Good Cheeto, Bad Cheeto,” with cutout photos of the cheese snack and Trump’s face.

Furthermore, it seemed that for all the efforts of the Mallory-Perez-Sarsour diversity troika and all the online rhetoric about intersectionality and privilege-checking, the demographics of the march were exactly what its critics of color had complained about: overwhelmingly white. There were a few African-American, Latina, and East Asian women to be sure, but not many. And after three hours’ worth of trudging through the crowds and looking at thousands of demonstrators, I spotted exactly four hijabs. Perhaps socially conservative Muslim women don’t really want to associate with double-entendre hats and “I Grab My Own Pussy” posters.

There was another demographic not much in evidence: men. The march’s organizers had begged “all defenders of human rights” to get themselves to the Mall and show the flag. *New York* magazine writer Jonathan Chait wrung his hands: “For men misinformed by its poorly-chosen name, the Women’s March is for ALL anti-Trump Americans. Please attend!” Yet the female-male ratio on Jan. 21 stagnated at an overwhelming 30-1: the occasional guy in a T-shirt reading “Ask Me About My Feminist Agenda.” I asked one of the men, Joe Newton, who hailed from Brooklyn and looked as though he could be Bob Bland’s next-door neighbor with his earring and skinny pants, what had happened to the rest of his sex. “I don’t know,” Newton answered. “I wish there were more men here. It wasn’t intended to be exclusive.”

The most telling aspect of the march was its sad-sack aura, of which the relative absence of male participants was only one part. Ultra-saturated pink is a

color that doesn't flatter most complexions and hair hues, and it especially doesn't flatter women who believe that attention to one's looks is internalized sexism and would rather stay up all night painting uteruses on posters. When the most glamorous female at a gathering is the 82-year-old Gloria Steinem (who was distinctly not wearing one of the cat caps but, rather, a perfectly tailored parka and a perfectly styled blowout), something is off.

The vast crowds and the general chaos prevented me (and many of the marchers) from getting anywhere near the central and most sensationalized portions of the event. I missed Madonna's various bombs: F- and blowing-up-the-White-House. (She later clarified that she'd had no serious thoughts of anti-presidential violence.) I missed Ashley Judd's recitation of a poem about Trump's supposed sexual yearnings for his daughter Ivanka.

But what I didn't miss was the feeling that the march wasn't really about an opportunity to "make history," as the website put it. None of the "serious" issues that the *Washington Post*'s Petula Dvorak alluded to in her column—the glass ceiling, the 78 cents that women are said to earn for every man's dollar—found its way onto any of the handmade posters I saw. Only a handful of the demonstrators' signs mentioned, say, immigration, climate change, and restrictions on Muslims, favorite progressive causes all. The march instead seemed to be a form of grief work: Hillary Clinton was supposed to win the election, but she didn't. The hated Trump won instead, and the huge gathering of the likeminded who had voted for her was therapy.

"I came for my daughters," said Bonnie Rae of South Bethany, Delaware, who had risen in the middle of the night to ride in a caravan of five busloads of women. "I want something better for the future than what we have now."

Late that night on a D.C. Metro train a woman sitting five rows behind me who had attended the march announced loudly, "I felt comforted. All around me it's all red. I'm from western Michigan where it's all red." ♦

Chilly Trade Winds

Sen. Mike Lee's quest for a congressional say on tariffs. **BY JOHN McCORMACK**

Shortly after noon on January 20, America's newly installed president issued a declaration of war against global free trade. "We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies, and destroying our jobs. Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength," Donald Trump said in his inaugural address. "We will follow two simple rules: Buy American and hire American."

One of the big questions surrounding the Trump presidency is just how aggressively he'll advance protectionism. The new Republican president, who has changed his party affiliation five times as an adult, is famous for his bluster and shifting political views. But his mercantilist position that international trade is a zero-sum game is perhaps the most consistent political belief he's ever held. Back in the 1980s he warned that Japan was ripping us off. Now China and Mexico are the two biggest threats. "I'd love to have a trade war with China," Trump said in a 2010 interview on Fox Business. "If we did no business with China, frankly, we'll save a lot of money."

During the election, Trump advocated a 45 percent tariff on Chinese imports and vowed to slap a 35 percent tariff on any company that leaves the United States or builds a new factory outside of the United States. Three days after taking office, Trump fulfilled one protectionist campaign promise by signing an executive order withdrawing the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (a trade deal that President Obama negotiated but Congress never held a vote to ratify). Right now, the markets

seem confident that Trump won't spark a global trade war: The Dow Jones industrial average hummed right along to a record 20,000 points on January 25 (up nearly 2,000 points since Election Day).

But it's possible that the markets are either underestimating Trump's willingness to follow through on his more aggressive promises or overestimating Congress's ability to block the president from doing anything disastrous. Senator Mike Lee argues that Congress has ceded too much power to the executive to raise tariffs. The Utah Republican points to a 1974 law that allows the president to enact temporary tariffs of 15 percent and a 1930 law that might have transferred to the president even broader authority.

"The Tariff Act of 1930 in section 338A allows the president, when he finds that the public interest will be served, to declare new or additional duties for as long as he sees fit," Lee tells THE WEEKLY STANDARD. So President Trump could unilaterally enact a 35 percent tariff on a particular company's imports under the Smoot-Hawley Tariff, as the act is better known? "That is a concern," Lee says. "One could read this provision in a way that would suggest a president could take an action like that. I'm not certain there isn't another limit in the law that might complicate that." World Trade Organization agreements, for example, could theoretically block some executive actions, but it's not clear to Lee that any private party could successfully challenge the administration.

In Lee's view, it's too dangerous for Congress to leave any chance of a trade war up to the whims of any president, and just before the close of business on January 20, Lee's office announced that he had introduced the Global Trade Accountability Act,

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which would subject executive actions on trade to congressional approval.

When asked why placing tariffs on companies that move factories overseas is such a bad idea, Lee recalls that his grandfather, a “T-Man” or federal agent employed by the Treasury Department in the 1930s,

used to bemoan the fact that he as a T-Man was involved in the enforcement of the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act, which he blamed—and many economists have blamed—for creating the set of conditions that led to the Great Depression. The minute we start to look at job losses that occur here in the United States as something that requires action that would kick off a trade war, we have to take into account those risks.

Lee insists his bill isn’t targeting Trump. “We’ve made clear that this is part of a much broader effort, one that I’ve undertaken for the last few years to try to restore power to Congress that properly belongs to Congress. It has nothing to do with this particular president,” Lee says. “We started this effort long before we had any idea who was going to be in the White House or what their position might be on trade.” Lee points out that Trump has expressed support for the REINS Act, a bill that requires congressional approval of major executive regulations, and the senator hopes that Trump will see his trade bill in a similar light.

It’s hard to imagine Trump relinquishing power on an issue he cares so much about, and Lee’s effort is just getting off the ground. It doesn’t have any cosponsors yet. “It’s not the kind of thing that’s exciting immediately to everyone,” Lee says. “Most senators I know don’t stay up late at night worrying about section 338A of the Tariff Act.”

Right now in Washington, trade policy matters are wrapped up in a broader effort to reform the tax code. The House GOP proposal calls for switching from a corporate income

tax rate of 35 percent to a business consumption tax of 20 percent. The plan would allow full and immediate expensing of investments—making the tax on investment effectively zero—and would eliminate the deduction for interest, thus favoring equity over debt. The tax is “border adjustable,” meaning that it applies to imports but not exports.

That last piece of the reform, “border adjustment,” has been the subject of some controversy since Trump was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal*



Lee: Really, it's about trade—not Trump.

January 16 calling the idea “too complicated.” The president quickly walked that comment back and told the news website *Axios* on January 18 that his comments in the *Journal* “didn’t totally reflect [his views] accurately” and said that the idea is “certainly something that is going to be discussed.”

Senior GOP sources say that Trump’s top White House advisers are united behind the proposal. On January 19, *Breitbart News*, a reliable barometer of populist sentiment in the White House, reported that Paul Ryan had called border adjustment “responsible nationalism.” The headline blared: “‘Responsible Nationalism’: Paul Ryan Warming to Donald Trump’s Ideology with ‘Border Adjustment Tax.’” *Breitbart* did not note that Ryan’s Roadmap for America’s Future Act called for a “border-adjustable business consumption tax” as far back as 2008, but it did report, “Sources close to the Trump

transition team described the coming fight for a border adjustment tax as one of the key policy battles the president-elect and his team will aim to tackle early on in his administration.”

It certainly fueled some overblown headlines Trump’s first week in office. Because the United States imports far more than it exports, the border-adjustment part of tax reform would generate \$1 trillion in revenue over a decade, according to the Tax Foundation. White House press secretary Sean Spicer suggested that therefore

the portion of revenue collected on Mexican imports could be used to cover the cost of a border wall. The media erupted with reports the administration was ready to slap a 20 percent tariff on Mexico, though the corporate tax replacement would apply to all goods, of domestic or foreign origin, consumed in the United States. Spicer’s suggestion was something of an accounting fiction anyway. Kyle Pomerleau and Stephen J. Entin of the Tax Foundation write that “the plan also lowers the corporate tax rate

and enacts full expensing, so on net the tax changes will likely reduce overall business tax revenue.” In other words, the revenue from border adjustment can’t both finance a tax reform and pay for a wall.

Of course, even if tax reform passes and spurs high growth among American businesses, Trump could still pursue a protectionist policy of raising tariffs. If Trump’s actions on trade go beyond penny-ante squabbling with air-conditioning companies, Mike Lee’s bill could become very exciting, very quickly. Overriding a presidential veto with bipartisan support would be difficult but it isn’t unthinkable. Democratic senator Jon Tester of Montana told THE WEEKLY STANDARD last week that Congress should “absolutely” have the final say over raising tariffs. The politics of trade isn’t easy for members of Congress, but the politics—and consequences—of a trade war could be far worse. ♦

An Odd Way to Discredit DeVos

Chile's education success story.

BY DARIO PAYA



Off to class in Punta Arenas, Chile

The opponents of Donald Trump's pick to be secretary of education, Betsy DeVos, are animated in large part by anger at her support for school voucher programs. And in their efforts to undermine vouchers, they've gone far afield—to Chile, to be exact, where an expansive school choice system was begun in 1980. To discredit DeVos, her opponents have set out to discredit Chile's voucher program, a parent-driven, choice-based, quality-improving education reform that has been a decades-long success.

The week of DeVos's confirmation hearing, the *Washington Post* published an article by associate political science professors Jennifer Pribble and Jennifer L. Erkulwater labeling the Chilean voucher system a "cautionary tale."

How so? Before the voucher system

was put in place, Chile tended toward the bottom of educational achievement rankings in Latin America; now it is at the top, as consistently shown by international tests such as the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment). The reason for the change has not been spending: Argentina and Uruguay no longer lead the regional rankings, but still generally outspend Chile on education.

Then there are the criticisms that are in fact endorsements of the system: The *Washington Post* presents as problematic the fact that "since vouchers were introduced, public school enrollment has continued to decline." You bet. Given a choice and a voucher, people left the public system and stayed away.

The article offers a puzzling indictment of school choice in Chile, that "the voucher system has not improved education opportunities for many poor or rural children." I say

"puzzling" because the article itself describes the very poor and rural children as those with no access to private options. If the problem is that the rural poor do not have enough choices, is the solution to do away with choices altogether or to find ways to provide to the poor the full extent of choice enjoyed by other students?

Chile recognized that some kids—primarily the very poor and rural—were being "left behind." But the way to fix that problem was not to get rid of vouchers, but to expand the system. That expansion, now the better part of a decade old, has had amazing results that Pribble and Erkulwater somehow forgot to mention.

The revision to the voucher system was led by socialist Michelle Bachelet, who, when Chile's "experiment" with school choice began in 1980, was living in exile in East Germany. To her credit, 30 years later as president, she led the most significant reform towards expanding a system based on parental choice.

With massive bipartisan support, a "preferential" school voucher was created—that is, one worth more, sometimes almost twice the value of regular vouchers—to provide more options for very poor and rural families. The results have been significant.

Economist Christopher Neilson noted in a 2013 working paper that "this reform raised the test scores of poor children significantly and closed the gap between these students and the rest of the population by one third." Neilson said the "policy changed the nature of competition among schools" and that "the observed policy effect is due mostly to the increase in the quality of schools in poor neighborhoods and not to a resorting of students to better schools or the entry of new higher-quality schools. The introduction of targeted vouchers is shown to have effectively raised competition in poor neighborhoods, pushing schools to improve their academic quality."

The performance gap between the country as a whole and the poorest 40 percent was cut by one-third in just five years.

Back when the base voucher wasn't

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INDEPENDENT PICTURE SERVICE / UIG / GETTY

big enough to liberate the rural poor from the monopolistic power of public schools, those schools could still spend their budget on things other than “quality” and the parents were trapped. Once the bigger preferential vouchers were introduced, those parents’s options dramatically expanded and public schools reacted predictably, increasing their quality to keep them from leaving. Two thirds of the improvement in the education of Chile’s poor can be attributed to voucher-encouraged improvements in the quality of public schools in poor neighborhoods. A third of those improved outcomes can be credited to parents sending their kids to private schools.

There are many other lessons to be learned from the Chilean experience. One is that vouchers are not a cure-all. The virtuous effects of vouchers, choice, and competition in Chile have been hampered and limited over the years by increased government control over all aspects of education. With very limited autonomy, with schools singing mostly government-dictated content in government-regulated style, there’s little space for real competition, innovation, and progress. Do not, for a moment, believe that vouchers are enough to rescue education from public strangulation.

Pribble and Erkulwater conclude their article in the *Post* with the predictable claim that the voucher system “has increased socioeconomic inequalities” in Chile. Wrong again. Using the Gini index of inequality, Claudio Sapelli, professor of economics at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, has shown that the level of inequality among older generations of Chileans is comparable to that of Mozambique. But among Chileans born in 1980 (the year the voucher system was introduced), the Gini index is comparable to that of France—and more equal than the United States.

Care to guess what the biggest driver of that change was?

School choice in Chile, far from being a cautionary tale, has been a force for improved educational achievement and greater social equality. ♦

A Specter Is Haunting Davos

The EU in denial.

BY DOMINIC GREEN



Mopping up the tears of a few thousand woeful statists

Every January, Davos Man, that semi-mythical hominid whose natural habitat is the club lounges of major airports, migrates to his eponymous Swiss Alps resort for the World Economic Forum. There, he huddles in a warm cave of mutual congratulation. Last week, the usual avalanche of glib optimism came down from the town of Davos. But there were also clouds over the magic mountain, and even warnings of heavy weather.

John Kerry, portentous and vague to the end, speculated that Donald Trump’s presidency would last “a year, two years, whatever.” British prime minister Theresa May, hoping that the Trump administration will last long enough to grant a post-Brexit trade deal, pitched for business

with a we-never-close desperation. Xi Jinping, the first Chinese leader to attend the forum, seemed to have prepared by reading *The Magic Mountain*, Thomas Mann’s novel set in a Davos sanatorium. “Pursuing protectionism is like locking oneself in a dark room,” Xi said, issuing prescriptions to the world’s leaders as if they were tubercular invalids. “Wind and rain might be kept outside, but so are light and air.”

The health of the European Union was also on the agenda. These days, the sick man of Europe is the eurozone itself. Its constitution is weak, its currency ailing, its prospects for recovery grim. Brexit Britain, fearful of economic gangrene, prefers to risk becoming Europe’s phantom limb. In Berlin, Doktor Merkel prescribes cold baths for the debtor nations of Europe’s southern tier, while running a hot current account surplus of 9 percent, far above the EU’s legal

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limit. In France, National Front leader Marine Le Pen campaigns for the presidency peddling a crank cure of “Frexit,” while implying that some of France’s immigrants might like to Frexit too. In Eastern Europe, the national governments self-medicate with stronger immigration policy.

Meanwhile in Brussels, the EU’s leaders insist that there is no alternative to the union, and no alternative future for it other than “convergence” into a single state. Like self-levitating fakirs, the Eurocrats insist on mind over matter. They can afford not to mind: Their patients’ feelings do not matter. The leaders of the EU are not elected by Europe’s voters, but in secret deals between the union’s national governments.

National politicians are, however, still subject to the inconveniences of democracy. Perhaps this is why two of them spoke candidly in the consulting room at Davos about Europe’s ailments, and what can be done to alleviate them.

“The whole idea of an ever-closer Europe has gone, it’s buried,” Mark Rutte declared. Rutte is the prime minister of Holland, one of the six signatories of the 1951 Treaty of Paris, the original cornerstone of Europe’s union. His center-right People’s party is on course to lose the March elections to Geert Wilders’s Euroskeptic and anti-immigrant Party for Freedom.

“The problem with Europe is Europe,” admitted Pier Carlo Padoan. He is the finance minister in Italy’s lame-duck center-left government. Italy was another of the founding signatories of the Treaty of Paris. In December, Padoan’s prime minister Matteo Renzi lost a referendum on constitutional reform that was seen as a vote of confidence in Renzi’s pro-EU economic policies.

Italy’s new prime minister, Paolo Gentiloni, is trying to recapitalize several large banks, including the Monte dei Paschi di Siena, the country’s third largest. In late December, Gentiloni’s government set aside 20 billion euros of state money for bank recapitalization, and asked for another 6.6 billion euros from the European

Central Bank. The ECB demurred. Article 32(4) of the EU’s Bank Recovery and Resolution Directive allows state aid only as a last resort.

“In many, if not all, European countries,” Padoan admitted, “there is a tendency to say our problems are generated in Brussels or Frankfurt.”

The EU’s leaders responded like ostriches in winter and dug their heads further into the snow. Martin Schulz, the outgoing president of the European parliament, said that Rutte should “have the courage to say that we need ever closer union more than ever in the 21st century, and without it the EU has no future.”

Schulz accused Euroskeptic members of the European parliament of “trying to destroy the EU from within,” even drawing salaries from an institution they were trying to undermine. He alluded to MEP Marine Le Pen as an example. Perhaps her constituents should vote again, until they get it right and agree with Schulz. Then again, perhaps the voters of Europe should be allowed to elect the president of the EU’s highest institution.

If the EU’s leaders continue to resist the democratic revolt of the voters, they will go the way of the Neanderthals who once roamed the valleys of Switzerland. Europe’s middle class, Padoan said, is “disillusioned about the future, disappointed about the job prospects for their kids, and disappointed about the security that they can get out of a welfare system that may become unsustainable.” They are expressing their dissatisfaction by “saying no to anything that policymakers suggest.”

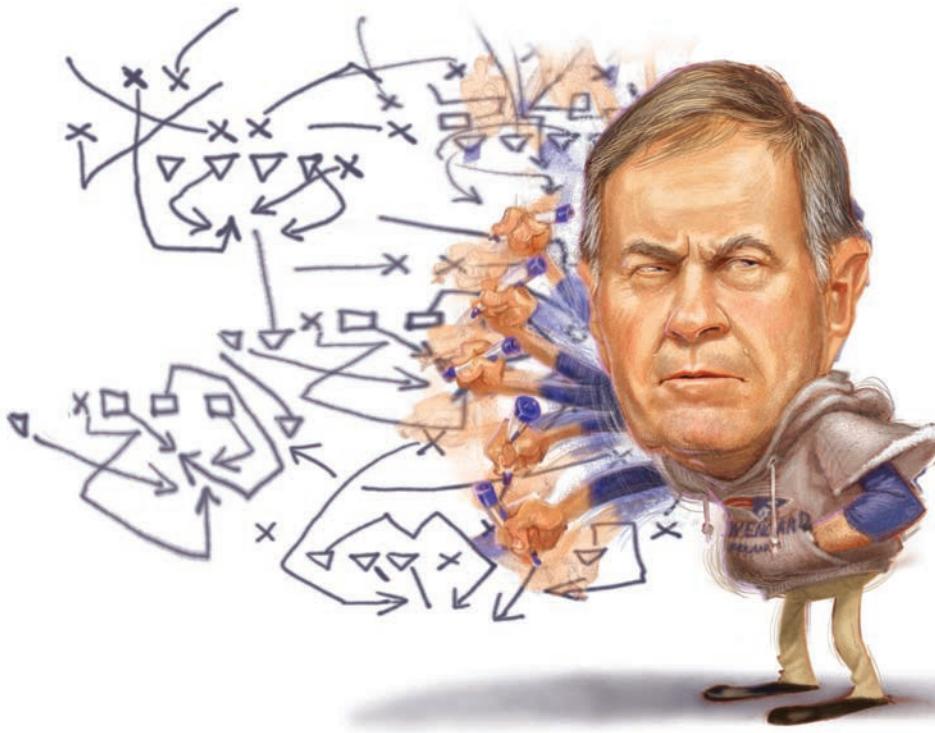
National elections are the forum for this refusal. It is these elections, not the coercion and subterfuge from Brussels, that will determine the future of the EU and its currency. Padoan called last year’s tremors—Brexit and the Italian referendum—a “sign of crisis.” The imminent elections in Holland, France, and Italy will intensify this crisis. Geert Wilders is surging towards winning the largest share of the vote in Holland. Marine Le Pen is leading the polls for the first round of voting for the French

presidency. In Italy, the insurgent left-wingers of Beppe Grillo’s Five Star Movement are breathing down the Democratic party’s neck, and may become the Rome parliament’s second-largest party.

The insurgents are forcing the historic parties to campaign as nationalists. In Italy, Padoan’s center-left party is moving left, to head off the Five Star Movement. In Holland, Rutte’s center-right party is tacking further right, to stanch the loss of voters to Wilders. In France, another of Europe’s original six signatories, François Fillon performs the same rightward maneuver. This week, Fillon promised “real controls” at France’s borders and said that the country should “ignore” the Schengen Agreement, which guarantees free movement within the EU. Fillon is likely to defeat Le Pen in the second round of the presidential election.

Europe’s voters, like the peasants of old, are revolting. Their revolt is, however, more against the EU’s policies than against the idea of the EU. Polls suggest that the voters understand the problem better than Herr Schulz does. In France, Italy, and Holland, majorities of voters want to remain in the EU, but similar majorities also want the EU to reform. The voters want less rigidity on convergence towards a single state and more flexibility on borders, immigration, and debt repayments.

The incoming leaders of the EU’s core states will carry mandates to limit, alter, or even annul their current treaty obligations to Brussels. This dynamic offers the EU a choice. It can save itself by becoming more democratic, more accountable, and more responsive. Or it can continue with its current policies. These have wrought economic stagnation and the rise of ultranationalist parties across the Continent, and caused a lost generation through debt and emigration in the EU’s southern tier. If the EU pursues these failed policies in defiance of voters and their national leaders, the result will be the secession of a eurozone state. If that happens, the EU will go, like the road from Davos, downhill all the way. ♦



Pats' Solutions

The management secrets of Bill Belichick.

BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick was not going out of his mind when he told his team after its first playoff victory this year: “A big day for Rutgers!” Three of the Patriots’ players—Devin McCourty, Logan Ryan, and Duron Harmon—had gone to college there, and all three had intercepted passes in the game. This was not just a statistical improbability. It was a vindication of Belichick’s style of personnel management—the most idiosyncratic in the history of pro football, and the most successful.

Football players, however athletic, are pawns on a chessboard. All teams have playbooks. The Patriots’ is thicker and more complicated than most. So Belichick has constructed his team around players capable of

seeing the game as he does. This does not mean “delegating.” On the contrary—it means drilling every player to master his role (or “job”) and avoid mistakes. Mistake-avoidance is probably more important than inspiration. Aside from points scored, turnovers (fumbles and interceptions) are the statistic most closely correlated to wins. Belichick-coached players have internalized his phobia of turnovers. Thus Patriots running back Dion Lewis, who scored three touchdowns in that first playoff game, was mystified by those who called him a hero. Having also lost a fumble, he said, with undoubted sincerity, “I feel like this was my worst game ever, actually.”

Belichick believes games are won through mental preparation. He has built his team around jocks who can think and grow. This requires more than mere “football sense.” It requires a capacity for studying, the kind of

studying you do to get an “A” in Algebra 1. “You’re in a Friday . . . meeting,” former Patriots running back Heath Evans told an ESPN interviewer last fall. “Bill pulls out a sheet of paper and starts asking, ‘Hey, Kevin Faulk, what’s the Indianapolis Colts’ favorite blitz on third down and short in the red zone?’” When Belichick himself was asked in a recent interview what he thought his quarterback Tom Brady and the great Cleveland Browns running back Jim Brown had in common, he stressed only mental traits. Both were “astute and aware.” They had a “full-field comprehensive view.” And “when it’s time to work they’re locked in.”

How does one go about finding people studious, gifted, or patient enough to master complex offensive and defensive schemes? Belichick’s father Steve was a scout and a coach at the U.S. Naval Academy. For Bill Belichick, football is a culture, a body of tips, wisdom, and lore, the relevance of which is not limited to the gridiron. Belichick has always gravitated to people who feel the same way—second-generation coaches, like Jim (of Michigan) and John (of Baltimore) Harbaugh, sons of a coach at Michigan and Stanford. Among players, too, Belichick trusts ones from football families. Matthew Slater, his special-teams captain, is the son of Hall of Fame offensive tackle Jackie Slater. Offensive lineman Ted Karras is the great-nephew of the late Detroit Lions defensive tackle Alex Karras. Defensive end Chris Long is the son of Hall of Fame defensive end Howie Long (and, for what it’s worth, the great-nephew of Irvin Kershner, the director of *The Empire Strikes Back*).

A number of Patriots went to prestigious universities—Tom Brady and defensive tackle Alan Branch to Michigan, Slater to UCLA, and fullback James Develin to Brown. But elite institutions do not guarantee the intellectual preparation necessary to compete at the top level. (A truth of wide application!) Instead, to an unusual extent, the Patriots have chosen players from *football programs* that are complex in the same way the Patriots are. The Rutgers defense as it

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developed under Greg Schiano in the first decade of this century is the best example. But the Alabama defense run by coach Nick Saban is similarly confusing—to both the opponents who face it and the players required to learn it. Alabama linebacker Dont'a Hightower is one of the few players Belichick has ever sacrificed draft choices to obtain, in large part because he has a rare combination of size and quickness but surely also because, as the Crimson Tide's defensive captain, he was the chief on-field strategist for the most complicated (and successful) defensive scheme in the country.

Belichick's focus on specialization, paradoxically, rewards versatility. What qualifies players for specialized Belichickian roles is a general ability to learn and train. Star receiver Julian Edelman was a quarterback in college. Fullback Develin was a defensive tackle. Receiver Chris Hogan played lacrosse, a sport the Maryland native Belichick loves. Defensive back Nate Ebner was a rugby player—he competed with the U.S. Olympic squad in Brazil last summer.

Certain excellent players will prove unsuitable, for whatever reason, to a system built on study, direction-following, and interlocking responsibilities. Belichick will cut anybody. This midseason, the Patriots traded gifted linebacker Jamie Collins for a song. On the other hand, since suitability to the Belichick system is the *only* requirement, the Patriots can offer redemption to temperamental stars who have worn out their welcomes elsewhere: Corey Dillon, Randy Moss, LeGarrette Blount . . . the list is long.

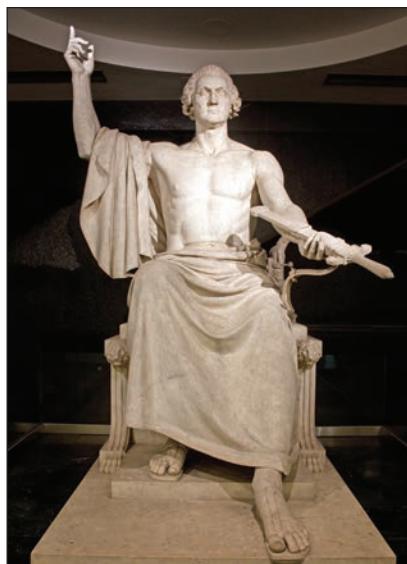
There is a Zen element to all of this. One of the highest compliments Belichick pays is to call a player "instinctual." By this he does not mean that they wing it. He means that having drilled, day in, day out, they react to a variety of situations *as if* by instinct. The Patriots' game is free and original, unlike the plodding play of supposedly loosey-goosey NFL teams. You follow rules to attain your freedom. You learn by rote so that you can live with abandonment. This, too, is a truth of wide application. ♦

Presidential Power

How much is too much?

BY GARY SCHMITT

More than a few commentators have analogized Donald Trump's election to that of Andrew Jackson: anti-establishment, populist, and rooted in a grassroots anger against existing Washington ways and policies. And more than a few commentators have



Blame George—he started it.

called Donald Trump's tweets and media blasts a modern-day version of Theodore Roosevelt's bully pulpit: a way to call out corporations and business elites for serving their own narrow interests over the broader ones of the nation.

What we have not seen is a Donald Trump who seems all that familiar with the constitutional "powers and duties" of an office he has now sworn to "faithfully execute." On the one occasion during the campaign he was asked directly about a constitutional issue—his willingness as president

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to defer to Congress's Article I prerogatives—his answer was a bollixed muddle that included a defense of an article that doesn't even exist. Indeed, only a few minutes after taking it, the new president declared that "the oath of office I take today is an oath of allegiance to all Americans," rather than, as the oath itself has it, a pledge to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

Taken together, it appears that Donald Trump's tenure may well be headed towards what critics will call an "imperial presidency," that is, a presidency in which the administration acts as though the formalities of the law can be stretched or even ignored in the name of accomplishing a perceived larger public good. The criticism will not be new. Both George W. Bush's and Barack Obama's presidencies were labeled as such.

That successive presidents of both parties have been charged with "imperial" overreach suggests that it has become a part of the everyday tool of partisanship. However, it also suggests that something more permanent now exists in our political system that lends itself to presidents acting in a manner that opens the door to the accusation.

The first and most obvious element is America's role in the world. As Alexis de Tocqueville noted long ago, the president's power in comparison with that of the monarchs of Europe can appear weak, but the reason for this lies "more in circumstances than laws." It is in foreign affairs that "the executive power of a nation finds occasion to deploy its skill and force." A global power such as the United States will inevitably require a chief executive to wield expansive discretion on the world stage and especially so when at war.

Next, the expansion of the federal government and the regulatory state

cannot help but lead to the expansion of the executive authority, as it administers the vast array of laws and mandates that now constitute American government. Even a president who wishes to clear the books of the thousands of regulations and policy directives issued by his predecessor will have to exercise his executive scythe in a manner governed by his own reading of the law and his own policy preferences.

And, of course, every president these days thinks he's acting in the name of the people, with a mandate to fundamentally change this or that about the country. In the process, he makes too little of the fact that his actual power rests on the Constitution, not popular vote, and that, unlike the legislatures in parliamentary systems, congressional majorities have wills and minds of their own. Schooled by Woodrow Wilson to believe that a president is "the only national voice in affairs" and "if he rightly interpret the national thought and boldly insist upon it, he is irresistible,"

modern presidents habitually promise too much and then face the need to expand their reach to try to accomplish those lofty goals.

These underlying facts of American political life are not likely to change anytime soon, if ever. The power of the presidency, moreover, was never intended to be minimal. Within a decade of the revolution, the founding generation had overcome their fears of anything smacking of monarchical authority. They saw, in the absence of independent, unitary executive authorities at both the state and national levels, shoddy governance when it came to domestic and national security affairs. America's first constitution, the Articles of Confederation, did not have a separate executive branch, and the Constitution, in adopting a system of separated powers, intended to free up executive capabilities more than limit them. Accordingly, George Washington, the first president, was quick to assert the office's primacy in foreign affairs, control over the executive

departments, and, with the "State of the Union" address, leadership in setting out the policy issues of the day that he believed needed to be addressed by the government.

In sum, by virtue of both its design and evolution, the presidency has taken on expansive powers. As a result, it's not always easy to draw the correct line between the legitimate exercise of executive authority and its abuse. But it's an issue almost guaranteed to arise given the new president's stated agenda and his executive style. Democrats will be looking early and often for any perceived abuse of office. The more difficult task will be across the aisle. Republicans in Congress will want to push back against those charges as undoubtedly partisan and will sometimes agree with the policy ends being pursued by the president but, at the same time, have their own oaths to "support and defend the Constitution." One suspects the next four years will not be easy ones for those who take their oath seriously. ♦

Trade and Growth Protect Against Global Turmoil

THOMAS J. DONOHUE

PRESIDENT AND CEO
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

As our new government begins to tackle its many domestic priorities, it's important to remember that unpredictable global events can have an enormous impact on our economy at any time. Our leaders can help minimize global turmoil and protect against its negative effects by fostering a strong and growing economy at home. Growth enables us to fund our military and defense initiatives, meet our domestic needs, and better support global economic stability.

A critical component of achieving the growth we need is ensuring robust international trade. President Trump has repeatedly called for expanding trade while strengthening trade deals in favor of American workers. The question is how to improve deals where possible without losing what works. Missteps could trigger restrictions on trade that

cost American jobs, increase costs for families, and cede U.S. global leadership to others.

For example, the previous administration's failure to convince Congress to pass the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and the current administration's decision to formally withdraw from the pact, may have pleased trade opponents. But it doesn't change the fact that our country must find a way to meet the original objective of the TPP, which was to tap into the extraordinary opportunities of the Asia-Pacific region for the benefit of America.

Renegotiating NAFTA is equally important. There are undoubtedly ways a two-decades-old agreement can be strengthened and improved, but we must not put at risk the 14 million American jobs our trade in North America supports.

In addition to trade, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce looks forward to helping the new government drive a variety of pro-growth priorities—

including regulatory relief, tax reform, and energy development. These will promote stability and benefit the entire world. A recent report from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects that a more robust U.S. economy could help push global growth to 3.4% this year, up from 3.1% last year. But the IMF's report also cautions that we are entering a period of greater global uncertainty.

To protect America from disruptive events around the world, our leaders must do all they can to promote prosperity at home. This includes strengthening our trading relationships, which will not only provide an economic boost but also give us a powerful foothold from which to influence global events. In our increasingly unpredictable world, the Chamber stands ready to help expand American trade and implement a far-reaching agenda of pro-growth policies.



Learn more at
uschamber.com/abovethefold.

Where School Choice Is a Way of Life

The Vermont solution on education.

BY GEOFFREY NORMAN

Eight hundred people showed up for the meeting. So many that it was necessary to use the school gymnasium instead of the more intimate and comfortable auditorium, as planned.

It is a hard trick, here in Vermont, getting that many people to come out at night to attend a meeting on some issue of public concern. While the state is famous for its town meetings (see Norman Rockwell's *Freedom of Speech* painting), most issues are settled by secret ballot these days rather than by public debate and a show of hands, the parliamentary device known as "dividing the house." People hereabouts say the only public meeting guaranteed to draw a big crowd is one where the issue being debated has to do with the deer season. Propose the legal taking of female deer during rifle season and they will come. Otherwise . . . not so much.

But the issue that drew the 800 to the Burr and Burton Academy in Manchester that December night is one that is every bit as fraught as the deer season. The people were there to listen and be heard and make a statement through their presence on the issue of school choice.

They were, almost all of them, in favor of it. And they wanted to let the educrats know this.

The Burr and Burton Academy is almost 190 years old. It is a private institution. Nonprofit, of course. There is no public high school in Manchester. Students of high school age in Manchester and certain surrounding communities that have no

public high school will be enrolled there at public expense. The school charges tuition and the town pays. The amount is open to negotiation. It is currently about \$17,000 per pupil per year.

School choice like that enjoyed for decades by Manchester, Vermont, is not—and could never be—supported by the education bureaucracy. It threatens not just their convictions but their livelihoods. Where parents can take their kids and the public money that is being spent on them out of one school and move them, and it, to another—well, this threatens the entire system.

When students and their parents choose not to attend Burr and Burton and attend another school, the town will pay this same amount toward the tuition. (As long, that is, as the school is not "religious" in character.) The student is then said to be "tuitioned out." In the jargon of the eduwars, the money follows the student.

By any measure, Burr and Burton is an excellent school. And judging by the turnout that night, people are very happy with it. So happy, in fact, that there are people who choose to live in Manchester precisely because of the school and this "tuitioning out" feature. The excellence of the school has attracted telecommuters and the

kind of people who are known, locally, as "trustafarians," and it is thought to have a very positive influence on property values.

The real measure of the school's success, however, is simpler than that. If it were a bad school, parents wouldn't send their children there. They would take the money and look elsewhere. People tend to take decisive action when the welfare of their children is at stake. Ask Charles Darwin. Or watch them spend a quarter of a million for an undergraduate degree for their darlings.

But there is something about this elementary concept that drives the education establishment to distraction and worse. In their minds, education is something like a public utility; that is, a monopoly that produces a standardized product of indifferent quality under the management of a vast and impregnable bureaucracy.

So school choice is not—and could never be—supported by the education bureaucracy. It threatens not just their convictions but their livelihoods. Where parents can take their kids and the public money that is being spent on them out of one school and move them, and it, to another—well, this threatens the entire system.

Why it might even, in the dark vision of one of the prominent Vermont opponents of school choice, "turn children into commodities."

Which of course stands the whole thing on its head. Commodities don't make choices. They are manipulated, packaged, and bundled. As are students in the grip of the industrial-education complex.

Still, the educrats resist the concept of choice and independent schools such as those that have existed in Vermont for generations. (There are 129 independent schools in Vermont. Just under 9,200 students attend these schools, about 11.5 percent of Vermont's student population.) So an unelected group of commissioners, called the Vermont State Board of Education, recently undertook to rewrite some of the rules that govern the state's independent schools. The people running schools like Burr and

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Burton—principals and board members—were alarmed and said so. People pushing the rules changes claimed it had something to do with “transparency” and “special needs” students, but those changes were, to anyone with eyes to see, the first inch of the camel’s nose. What the educrats don’t like about independent schools is precisely the thing that makes them successful—their independence.

Hence the meeting at Burr and Burton, where members of the VSBE defended their proposals to the skeptical and sometimes hostile 800. One reason for the proposed changes, according to Stephan Morse, the board’s chairman, was the recent and unpleasant failure of Burlington College, which, he said, had been insufficiently transparent and, when it failed, had left taxpayers on the hook.

Well, Burlington College failed under the leadership of one Jane Sanders, wife of Bernie. Her political connections were the school’s strongest—if not its only—asset. Still, the school was there, one day, like the circus train that had pulled in overnight, and you needed only to read the newspaper stories (which were pretty thin) to see that it was a chancy proposition. What Vermont did not need, and could not afford, was another institution devoted to education. The state is running out of students to educate.

There are 20,000 fewer of them now than there were 15 years ago, which, in a rational universe, would mean fewer schools and fewer teachers. This, of course, is unacceptable to an education apparatus that includes, most conspicuously, the teachers’ unions.

These are easily the most powerful organizations in the state. Even the deer hunters fear them. And the teachers’ unions hate and fear, with justification, Vermont’s independent schools, not least because members of their faculties do not belong to the National Education Association. What’s more, these schools are

successful, and when the education apparatus is downsized—as it inevitably will be—the strong will survive. Burr and Burton is strong.

As are some other Vermont independent schools, such as St. Johnsbury Academy, which was founded in 1842. Like Burr and Burton, it is prestigious, prosperous, and successful, attracting students from around the world. So it was also a target. And there was a meeting, like the one in Manchester. It was attended by 400



Burr and Burton buildings, above;
below, students on a school camping excursion



people. Among the defenders of the St. Johnsbury Academy is the *Caledonian Record*, the daily that serves the state’s “Northeast Kingdom.” The paper published the findings of Oliver Olsen, a state representative and supporter of school choice who had discovered that a member of the Vermont State Board of Education is on the payroll, of “an organization funded by public school teacher unions.” The man saw no conflict of interest, educrats being serenely confident in the belief that they are on the side of the good and enlightened

This meeting, like the one in Manchester, grew heated at times, and this

drew a tut-tut op-ed from “the paid executive director of the Vermont School Boards Association.” The educrats, it seems, do not like second guessing of their motives.

Now, all this might be of only minor, parochial interest. It is a Vermont story, after all, and there are fewer people in that entire state than populate the city of Charlotte, North Carolina. But there is reason to pay attention. Witness the grilling of Donald Trump’s choice for secretary of education, Betsy DeVos, who is an advocate for more choice and the empowerment of parents in decisions about the education of their children. She was treated roughly in her confirmation hearings, not least by the Jeanne d’Arc of the American left, Elizabeth Warren, who made it plain what she thinks of DeVos. Namely, that she simply will not do.

Interesting, since Warren once wrote, in her 2003 book *The Two-Income Trap*, “With fully funded vouchers, parents of all income levels could send their children—and the accompanying financial support—to the schools of their choice.” It is not an issue of “public versus private competition” she wrote. “The problem is not vouchers; the problem is parental choice.”

That sounds very much like the sort of person who would have attended one of those Vermont meetings back in December.

Vermont may be little, but this is the state that has blessed the nation with Bernie Sanders, so attention needs be paid. And if even here, people who have children to educate favor choice and if the system that has grown up over more than a century and a half is one that succeeds and enjoys public support, then maybe there is one thing this little state can teach the rest of the nation.

Once she is confirmed, Secretary DeVos should come up and see how choice is done and done right—while there is still time. ♦

The Final Obama Scandal

Closing the book on a deceptive narrative about the al Qaeda threat

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES
& THOMAS JOSCELYN

Less than 24 hours before the official end of the Obama presidency, while White House staffers were pulling pictures off the walls and cleaning out their desks, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) posted without fanfare another installment of the documents captured in Osama bin Laden's compound during the May 2011 raid in Abbottabad, Pakistan. The press statement that accompanied the release made an unexpected declaration: This batch of newly released documents would be the last one. "Closing the Book on Bin Laden: Intelligence Community Releases the Final Abbottabad Documents," the statement was headlined. According to a tally on the ODNI website, this last batch of 49 documents brings the total number released to 571.

For analysts who have paid attention to the Abbottabad documents, the numbers immediately caused alarm. For years, the Obama administration told the American people that the haul from the bin Laden compound was massive and important. In an interview on *Meet the Press* just days after the raid, Barack Obama's national security adviser, Thomas Donilon, said the material could fill "a small college library." A senior military intelligence official who briefed reporters at the Pentagon on May 7, 2011, said: "As a result of the raid, we've acquired the single largest collection of senior terrorist materials ever." Sources who have described the cache to THE WEEKLY STANDARD over the years have claimed that the number of captured documents, including even extraneous materials and duplicates, totals more than 1 million.

Can it really be the case that this release "closes the book"? The short answer: No, it can't.

"[Director of National Intelligence James] Clapper and

the old administration may want this to be closed, but it's far from closed," says Representative Devin Nunes, chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI). "Now the truth will begin to come out. It's just the beginning."

The documents have been at the center of an intense, five-year political battle between Republicans on Capitol Hill and the Obama administration, and an equally pitched bureaucratic battle between the Central Intelligence Agency and ODNI on one side, and U.S. military intelligence agencies on the other. The Obama administration and the intelligence community leaders who have been loyal to the president argue that the document collection provided valuable intelligence in the days after the raid that killed Osama bin Laden, but that what remains is unimportant and, in any case, supports the Obama administration's approach to al Qaeda and jihadist terror over the past eight years. Republicans and military intelligence officials have a different view: Used properly, the document collection can serve as an important tool in understanding al Qaeda and other Islamic radicals—their history, their ideology, their structure, their operations, and even, five years on, their plans—not only for U.S. intelligence officials, but for lawmakers, historians, and the American public.

Republicans on Capitol Hill have pushed to have the documents declassified and released as part of an effort to hold the Obama administration accountable for its relentless politicization of intelligence on al Qaeda and threats to the United States and its interests. Based on his conversations with analysts who have worked on the documents, Nunes believes that many of those not yet released will contradict Obama administration claims about al Qaeda, its relationships, and its operations.

In 2014, Nunes fought to include language in the Intelligence Authorization Act requiring the declassification and release of the bin Laden documents. The law mandated the release of all documents in the collection that could be disclosed without hurting U.S. national security. The intelligence community was required to specify any documents deemed too sensitive to release publicly and offer an

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explanation justifying that decision. Nunes says he has not yet received such an explanation for any of the tens of thousands of documents withheld from the public.

Why do the documents still matter? Over the course of eight years, President Obama and his advisers repeatedly downplayed the jihadist threat. The story of how bin Laden's documents were mischaracterized and mishandled offers important insights into how the administration pushed a deceptive narrative about al Qaeda and its branches around the globe. The jihadist threat grew—not diminished—over the course of the Obama administration. To this day, America and its allies continue to fight al Qaeda everywhere from West Africa to South Asia.

Because of its barbarism, massive land grabs, and multiple attacks in the West, the Islamic State (ISIS) dominates headlines these days. The Islamic State makes itself easy to see. But al Qaeda, the organization that birthed ISIS, is still alive and thriving, often masking the extent of its operations and influence. Since 2011, al Qaeda has grown rapidly in jihadist hotspots such as Syria, where today the group has 10,000 or more fighters, its largest guerrilla army yet.

Al Qaeda's resiliency was a terribly inconvenient fact for President Obama, who won his first campaign arguing that George W. Bush had exaggerated the threat from jihadist terror and had fought jihadists with means that were both unnecessary and un-American. Obama scaled back such operations across the board—ending the war in Iraq, withdrawing troops from Afghanistan, rewriting U.S. interrogation and detention policies, and releasing high-risk terrorists from the facility at Guantánamo Bay. When he ran for reelection, he told the American people that al Qaeda was “on the run” and had been “decimated.” His advisers sought to downgrade the nature of the threat to one of “violent extremists” and “lone wolf” attacks. Obama sold his efforts against al Qaeda as something close to a total victory.

“Today, by any measure, core al Qaeda—the organization that hit us on 9/11—is a shadow of its former self,” President Obama claimed on December 6, 2016, during his final counterterrorism speech. “Plots directed from within Afghanistan and Pakistan have been consistently disrupted.

Its leadership has been decimated. Dozens of terrorist leaders have been killed. Osama bin Laden is dead.”

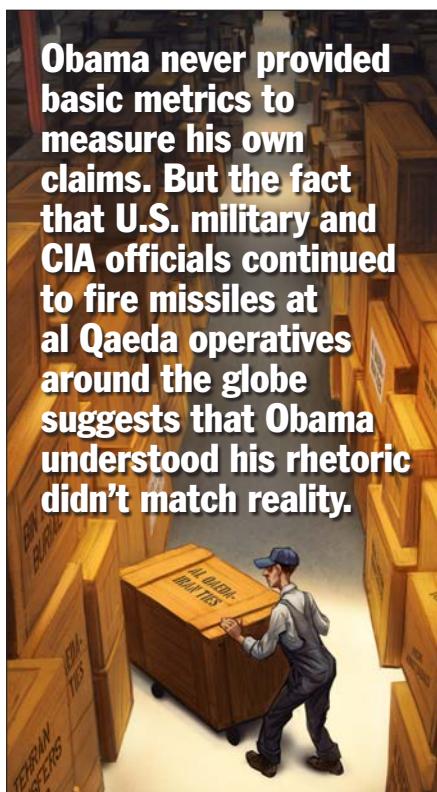
Some of this is certainly true: Osama bin Laden is dead, dozens of other jihadist leaders have been killed, and plots have been disrupted. But by most measures, al Qaeda is bigger today than ever. The organization and its branches are fighting in insurgencies in Afghanistan, Libya, Mali, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere. Obama briefly mentioned al Qaeda’s “branches” in some of these countries during his speech, but he left Americans with the impression that al Qaeda has been reduced to a nuisance—if that.

Obama said nothing about al Qaeda’s massive force in Syria. But the U.S. military has reported that U.S. attacks killed upwards of 150 “al Qaeda operatives” in Syria during the first weeks of 2017.

Obama’s public case on his success against al Qaeda centered on what he calls “core al Qaeda,” which neither he nor his advisers ever bothered to define precisely. The phrase seems to refer to the senior al Qaeda leaders based in South Asia, and specifically those who had a hand in the 9/11 hijackings. Most of the 9/11 plotters, as it happens, were killed or captured during the Bush administration. Obama was right that “dozens” of other “core” al Qaeda jihadists have been killed in drone strikes and raids during his tenure. But those leaders have been replaced, in some cases by men who have proven even more effective in building the terror group’s global network and guiding its transnational efforts.

How many senior al Qaeda leaders were there at the beginning of his administration, in January 2009? How many are there today? Obama never answered these rudimentary questions—he never provided basic metrics to measure his own claims. But the fact that U.S. military and CIA officials continued to fire missiles at al Qaeda operatives around the globe on a regular basis, at the direction of a president who claimed to have defeated al Qaeda, suggests that Obama understood his rhetoric didn’t match reality.

Which brings us back to the bin Laden files. There is no better resource for understanding al Qaeda, how it thinks and operates, at least through 2011, than the intelligence recovered in its founder’s compound. For this reason, and others, the Trump administration should ensure that the



ODNI doesn't get to close the book on bin Laden's files.

One explanation for the discrepancy between the number of files released and the overall total comes from the ODNI itself. The statement accompanying the latest release reported that an "interagency review of the classified documents" had been conducted "under the auspices of the White House's National Security Council staff." That is, the Obama national security team determined what the American people would or would not see in this release and how the release would be characterized.

The same team controlled the narrative about the documents from beginning to end. And in its particulars, their work more closely resembled a highly politicized propaganda campaign than an effort to inform the American public. It started, appropriately, as part of another campaign, Barack Obama's 2012 reelection.

Obama's domestic policy case in 2012 was straightforward. He claimed to have enacted policies that led to a broad economic recovery—slower than he'd hoped, but picking up steam. He boasted that he'd begun to transform the health care industry and would provide better care for all Americans while lowering costs.

On foreign policy, Obama touted two related accomplishments: He had ended the war in Iraq and was wrapping up in Afghanistan. He had al Qaeda "on the path to defeat." Obama boasted, with good reason, that his administration had been responsible for killing Osama bin Laden. He suggested, without good reason, that because bin Laden was dead, al Qaeda would soon meet the same fate.

His team used carefully selected bin Laden documents to help him make that case. On March 18, 2012, David Ignatius of the *Washington Post* reported that a "senior Obama administration official" had shown him a "small sample of the thousands of items" captured in bin Laden's compound. Ignatius claimed the documents showed that bin Laden was "a lion in winter" who "lived in a constricted world, in which he and his associates were hunted so relentlessly by U.S. forces that they had trouble sending the simplest communications." Bin Laden knew he was "losing," but was "still looking for the knockout blow," Ignatius claimed.

Peter Bergen, a longtime CNN analyst, echoed this assessment in his 2012 book, *Manhunt: The Ten-Year Search for Bin Laden from 9/11 to Abbottabad*. "At the White House, I was allowed to review a number of those just-declassified, unpublished documents in mid-March 2012," Bergen writes. Bin Laden supposedly enjoyed a "comfortable, if confining, retirement" and "was able to indulge his hobbies of reading and following the news, and of course he continued rigorously to observe the tenets of Islam."

John Brennan, who was then Obama's chief counterterrorism adviser, delivered a major speech at the

Wilson Center in Washington on April 30, 2012. Brennan conceded that "the dangerous threat from al Qaeda has not disappeared." But he claimed that the "core al Qaeda leadership is a shadow of its former self" and added: "we can look ahead and envision a world in which the al Qaeda core is simply no longer relevant." Brennan sought to distance this "core" from al Qaeda's groups around the globe. "Al Qaeda leaders continue to struggle to communicate with subordinates and affiliates," he claimed, citing bin Laden's files. Brennan began to believe his own propaganda and, in a bold prediction unlike the hedged assessments typical of intelligence officers, gave a time-frame for the end of al Qaeda. "If the decade before 9/11 was the time of al Qaeda's rise, and the decade after 9/11 was the time of its decline, then I believe this decade will be the one that sees its demise."

In May 2012, West Point's Combating Terrorism Center published a report that accompanied the release of 17 bin Laden documents—files handpicked by top White House and National Security Council officials. Not surprisingly, the report emphasized this same theme. Al Qaeda's leaders supposedly "enjoyed little control over either groups affiliated with [them] in name or so-called 'fellow travelers.'"

The message was clear: Jihadist groups may be metastasizing around the world, but they weren't tied to al Qaeda's self-contained "core," which was the real threat.

This narrative was fraudulent. Osama bin Laden, in the days and weeks and months before his death, was not only managing al Qaeda's international operations, he was micromanaging them. Testifying before HPSCI in April 2013, Director of National Intelligence Clapper explained that there were "over 400 intelligence reports that were issued in the initial aftermath immediately after the raid." These reports, based on bin Laden's documents, dealt principally with the "immediate threats" or "threat plotting." Obviously, bin Laden had been far from retired.

Documents released as a result of the 2014 National Intelligence Authorization Act and in the course of a Brooklyn terror trial in 2015 show that bin Laden communicated with subordinates in the Arabian Peninsula, East Africa, the Maghreb, throughout the Middle East, and into South Asia. These communications occurred regularly throughout the final year of his life. For security reasons, his contacts were interrupted at times, but he certainly didn't "struggle to communicate with subordinates and affiliates." It is also remarkable how deferential his men were in seeking direction on a variety of issues. Bin Laden was even playing sophisticated political games, using the threat of more terrorism to force Pakistani officials to negotiate a ceasefire.

Simply put, the White House wanted people to think that al Qaeda's leaders didn't maintain a cohesive international network and weren't very influential. That was flat wrong.

To his credit, Ignatius updated his reporting after new documents were released to the public via the Brooklyn court case in 2015. (Federal prosecutors there had introduced the declassified documents as part of their successful effort to convict a Pakistani man of participating in an al Qaeda bombing plot in England.) Ignatius reported on May 5, 2015, that bin Laden had been “ruminating about big strategic ideas but also micromanaging personnel decisions and counterespionage tactics.” Bin Laden was “directing a terrorist ‘great game’ from his secret lair in Abbottabad, Pakistan.” This is accurate, and it was decidedly not the picture the White House painted for Ignatius three years earlier.

The Obama White House wanted people to believe that al Qaeda’s “core” leadership had little sway outside of South Asia. But in the final months of Obama’s presidency, with the undeniable reality of al Qaeda’s growth and strength, his officials began to tell a different story.

Testifying before the Senate on June 28, 2016, Brett H. McGurk, the Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, discussed al Qaeda’s arm in Syria, al-Nusra Front. “With direct ties to Ayman al Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden’s successor, Nusra is now al Qaeda’s largest formal affiliate in history,” McGurk said.

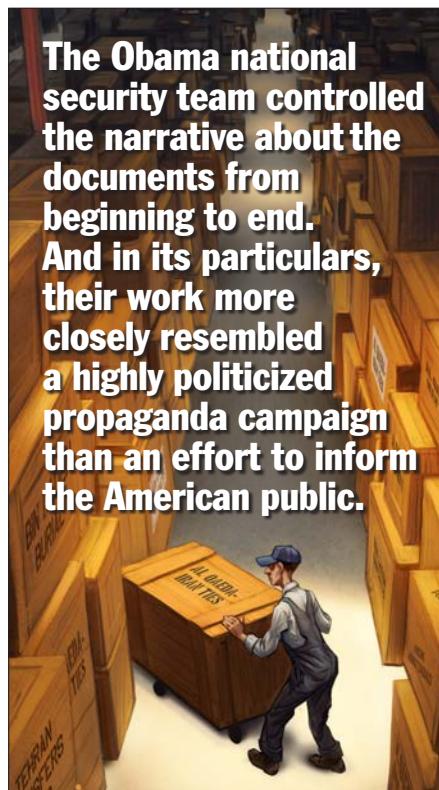
The White House used the bin Laden documents to further its propaganda campaign on al Qaeda well beyond the 2012 presidential election. In a major address at the National Defense University on May 23, 2013, to defend his counterterrorism strategy, Obama cited a letter from bin Laden to bolster his case. Obama quoted the letter in a way that suggested the al Qaeda leader had been concerned and defeated. Obama read these words from bin Laden: “We could lose the reserves to enemy’s air strikes. We cannot fight air strikes with explosives.”

Bin Laden did write those words. They came at the end of two paragraphs dealing with his strategy for fighting the Americans. But the full passage actually undermined Obama’s case. The “reserves” bin Laden described were a force in addition to those actively engaged in fighting Americans. And the point of bin Laden’s argument about the reserves was to make clear those “reserves” had been moved out of the drones’ primary kill box, which was

in northern Pakistan at the time. The full passage reads:

The Ummah [worldwide community of Muslims] should put forward some, but enough, forces to fight America. The Ummah must keep some of its forces on reserve. This will be in the Ummah’s best interests. The Ummah will use the reserve in the future, but during the appropriate time.

In the meanwhile, we do not want to send the reserves to the front line, especially in areas where the enemy only uses air strikes to attack our forces. So, the reserves will not, for the most part, be effective in such conflicts. Basically, we could lose the reserves to enemy’s air strikes. We cannot fight air strikes with explosives.



So bin Laden did worry about losing his “reserves,” but he took steps to make sure they did not perish. Other documents make it clear that bin Laden ordered many of his subordinates to relocate to safe havens in Afghanistan and elsewhere, where they would be out of the drones’ reach.

In that 2013 speech, Obama claimed that “core al Qaeda” was “a shell of its former self” and “on the path to defeat.” Bin Laden didn’t agree. In the same document Obama quoted out of context, bin Laden had written: “We still have a powerful force which we can organize and prepare for deployment.”

So a passage that Obama used to convey al Qaeda’s alleged desperation in reality reflected only its tactical adjustments. And a document that Obama cited to suggest al Qaeda’s weakness included private language from its leader indicating continued strength.

The cherrypicking was pervasive. In some releases, the ODNI and the White House had the full correspondence between bin Laden and his lieutenants but inexplicably released only part of it. One letter written by bin Laden, dated August 7, 2010, was included in the initial May 2012 release of documents. It concerned al Qaeda’s relationship with al Shabaab, the al Qaeda branch in Somalia. In that letter, bin Laden wrote that he wanted al Shabaab to keep its affiliation with al Qaeda secret because he was concerned that announcing a formal relationship might attract unwanted attention from the West or could hurt fundraising in the Gulf.

Some analysts, including those at West Point’s counterterrorism center, misread this letter as an indication

that al Shabaab and al Qaeda did not have a formal relationship. This was incorrect—a fact that would have been obvious had the ODNI and the White House released the entire set of correspondence. The letter released in May 2012 was an attachment to a longer letter from bin Laden, also written on August 7, 2010, but withheld from the public. That longer letter, made public as part of the 2015 terrorism trial in Brooklyn, included an extended discussion about the oath of loyalty (*bayat*) that al Shabaab leaders had taken to join al Qaeda. “As for the pledge of allegiance from the brothers in Somalia, let it be based on waging jihad to establish the Caliphate,” bin Laden wrote.

Why would the White House and ODNI release an attachment to a letter and not the letter itself? That’s unclear. But in both the attachment and the longer letter, bin Laden was acknowledging the formal relationship—a fact that cut against the administration’s claim that bin Laden was isolated and uninvolved in managing al Qaeda’s branches.

It’s obvious why the White House and ODNI withheld some other documents. According to sources familiar with the document release in May 2012, the White House deliberately withheld files showing the extraordinarily close ties between al Qaeda and the Taliban. At the time, the administration was pushing for “peace” talks with the Taliban, on the premise that the Taliban was more moderate than al Qaeda and might be encouraged to play a positive role in the future of Afghanistan. The main goal of the nascent negotiations was to persuade the Taliban to renounce its long-time alliance with al Qaeda. But the documents collected in the Abbottabad raid included many that clearly showed the intimacy of the Taliban-al Qaeda relationship (there were individuals with leadership roles in both organizations). Some of those documents were to have been included in the first document release in 2012. But when the White House learned that the documents could undermine support for talks with the Taliban, senior National Security Council staffer Lt. Gen. Doug Lute called West Point and had the documents withheld.

Given the abject failure of those talks and the subsequent embarrassing revelations about the administration’s handling of them, perhaps it would have been better in the end if they’d never taken place. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and her adviser Richard Holbrooke first pushed the Taliban peace talks at the State Department. In her book *Hard Choices*, Clinton says that she and her team were encouraged that a deal could be struck after Tayyab Agha, a senior aide to Taliban founder Mullah Omar, agreed to meet. They found him straightforward and gave him the nickname “A-Rod,” like the baseball player Alex Rodriguez. The Taliban was mainly interested

in freeing five of its top commanders from Guantánamo. Clinton writes that she proposed trading the senior Taliban figures for Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, the accused deserter who was then being held by the Taliban-al Qaeda axis. The talks ultimately accomplished nothing in America’s interest. The Taliban is on the rise inside Afghanistan today, after refusing to lay down its arms. The Clinton-approved talks did pave the way for the controversial swap of the “Taliban Five” for Bergdahl. But that’s it.

The failure of outreach to the Taliban would have been predictable to anyone privy to the bin Laden documents dealing with the Taliban, so it’s no wonder they were withheld. Some of the memos reveal that Agha, the man who was supposedly going to help end the Taliban’s alliance with al Qaeda, was directly communicating with senior al Qaeda leaders in 2010 and 2011, even as he was the Obama administration’s main point of contact for negotiations with the Taliban. There is no hint of tension between the Taliban and al Qaeda in the documents, which only saw the light of day thanks not to the Obama White House but to that 2015 terrorism trial in Brooklyn.

Agha was corresponding with bin Laden’s senior-most manager, a jihadist known as Atiyah Abd al Rahman. In a key letter to bin Laden, dated June 19, 2010, Rahman mentions that he is “in contact with” Agha and is passing along one of Agha’s missives.

That same letter from Rahman to bin Laden describes al Qaeda’s “very strong military activity” inside Afghanistan, including the group’s presence in at least eight different provinces. Rahman explained that bin Laden’s forces were closely cooperating with Siraj Haqqani, who is currently one of the Taliban’s top two deputy leaders and was already a key figure in the organization at the time.

The same month as Rahman’s letter, June 2010, the CIA announced its assessment of al Qaeda’s strength inside Afghanistan. Appearing on ABC’s *This Week*, then-CIA director Leon Panetta claimed that al Qaeda’s presence in the country was “relatively small” and “at most . . . 50 to 100” fighters. The Obama administration stuck with that lowball estimate for years to come, well after recovering Rahman’s letter to bin Laden in May 2011. Yet in his letter, Rahman reported the strength of one of al Qaeda’s “battalions” in Afghanistan as 70 fighters—more in just that one unit, in just one province, than the low-end of the CIA’s range for the entire country. And the group was fighting in several provinces at the time. Think about that: The administration chose to use its erroneous assessment in public discussions of al Qaeda for nearly six years, even though primary source evidence from bin Laden’s own compound directly refuted it.

In April 2016, U.S. officials finally began to walk away from the “50 to 100” canard. This past December, the U.S.

military announced that 250 al Qaeda operatives had been killed or captured in Afghanistan in 2016. That figure was two and a half times greater than the Obama administration's longstanding estimate. The Taliban never did abandon al Qaeda. Last month, the Taliban released a lengthy video celebrating its undying brotherhood with al Qaeda.

So the Obama policy failed, for reasons that were entirely predictable, and the administration continued to downplay al Qaeda's role in Afghanistan long after they had evidence that contradicted their own assessments. None of this kept President Obama from declaring in May 2013 that "the Afghan war is coming to an end."

If many Americans have forgotten about Afghanistan, following the lead of their president, al Qaeda has not. And now the Trump administration inherits an Afghanistan with an entrenched and emboldened al Qaeda, still working side by side with the Taliban.

Perhaps the most egregious example of the Obama administration's politicization of the bin Laden documents concerns the relationship between Iran and al Qaeda. In the statement accompanying ODNI's latest release, we are told that the documents therein demonstrate bin Laden's "hatred, suspicion of Iran." The statement further claims that this antipathy "mirrors themes in previous releases" from bin Laden's compound. Indeed, the Obama White House used the bin Laden documents to portray al Qaeda and Iran as mortal enemies.

Bin Laden was suspicious of Iran. He worried that members of his family, including one of his wives and a son, would be tracked by Iranian intelligence. The Iranians have held some senior al Qaeda leaders in custody, and their imprisonment became a bone of contention between the two sides. Al Qaeda even kidnapped an Iranian diplomat in order to force a prisoner exchange. In one newly released letter, written in May 2009, bin Laden discussed the "blatant Iranian expansion" and the great "danger" it poses. Bin Laden set forth a plan for "scholars" and others to warn Sunnis throughout the Muslim world of the Shiite Iranian threat. There is no question that this particular missive from bin Laden is filled with invective toward the Iranians.

However, none of this stopped bin Laden and al Qaeda from working with the Iranian regime. In an October 18, 2007, letter, bin Laden chastised one of his subordinates for openly threatening attacks inside Iran. He explained:

You did not consult with us on that serious issue that affects the general welfare of all of us. We expected you would consult with us for these important matters, for as you are aware, Iran is our main artery for funds, personnel, and communication, as well as the matter of hostages.

That seems significant. The leader of al Qaeda, in an internal letter on the operations of the terror network, describes Iran as al Qaeda's "main artery for funds, personnel, and communication, as well as the matter of hostages."

Other documents discuss al Qaeda's plans to use Iran as a launch pad for attacks elsewhere and mention that the group has a top facilitator stationed in the country. The pattern that emerges from the documents released to the public is of a relationship fueled by mutual distrust and based on mutual exploitation. But, as that October

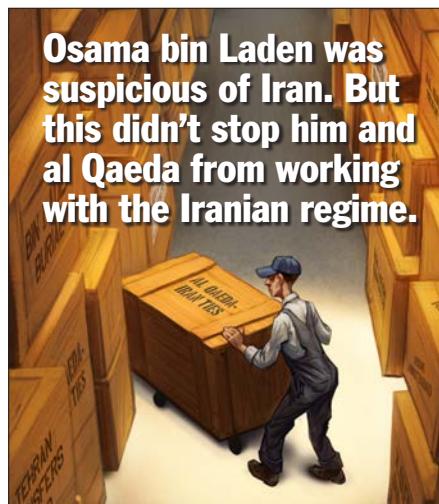
2007 letter makes clear, it's a relationship that is absolutely critical to al Qaeda's continued growth.

We reported on the relationship in these pages in 2011. David S. Cohen, at the time undersecretary of Treasury for terrorism and financial intelligence and currently the deputy director of the CIA, told us: "There is an agreement between the Iranian government and al Qaeda to allow this network to operate. There's no dispute in the intelligence community on this." A Treasury official added: "This network serves as the core pipeline through which al Qaeda moves money, facilitators, and operatives. Without this network, al Qaeda's ability to recruit and collect funds would be severely damaged."

Why would the White House and ODNI claim that bin Laden's views of Iran were characterized by "hatred" and "suspicion" without mentioning that bin Laden nonetheless viewed Iran as the most important conduit for money, manpower, and supplies to keep al Qaeda alive? We can only speculate that the administration's efforts to build support for and defend its controversial nuclear deal with Iran may well have dictated that decision.

Such politicization has ample precedent. In its 2015 Worldwide Threat Assessment, released just as the debate over the Iran deal was heating up, ODNI downplayed Iran's support for terror, removing language about Iran's involvement in terror that had appeared in previous assessment.

THE WEEKLY STANDARD contacted an ODNI spokesman via email to ask why the U.S. intelligence community's statement on January 19 claimed bin Laden harbored "hatred" and "suspicion" of Iran but did not mention al Qaeda's facilitation network inside Iran. We



asked specifically about the October 2007 letter in which bin Laden called Iran the “main artery” for al Qaeda. The ODNI spokesman responded: Bin Laden “had a delicate dance with Iran. He maintained a fierce, private hatred of Shia Muslims. But he didn’t publicly criticize Iran since he had family members in hiding there.”

We responded by asking what might seem an obvious follow-up: “Doesn’t the very fact that he had family members hiding there—with the blessing and sometimes active protection of the Iranian regime—demonstrate rather clearly that the Iran-UBL/AQ relationship was also mutually beneficial and at times even friendly?”

The ODNI spokesman responded:

Everything with Iran is complicated. UBL was the leader of the Sunni terrorist moment, a movement that hates Shia. UBL was also pragmatic. He always had some implicit concern that Iran might harm his family members. With Iran, I was wrong about the “in hiding.” Instead, I should have said, there were many senior AQ members, and at least one UBL family member, under house arrest there. The passageway you cite is not the same thing as collusion with the Iranian government. That is, AQ had the ability to transit the country; but it wasn’t done in any sort of partnership with the Iranian government.

This, too, was incorrect. It’s not only the case that the Iranian regime knew that al Qaeda operatives were working in Iran, there was an agreement that explicitly permitted it. And it’s not only the case that the al Qaeda operatives had the ability to transit Iran, the Iranian regime facilitated that transit. The coordination with Iran came as a result of a secret agreement and included active assistance to al Qaeda members.

Indeed, the U.S. government has described the collusion and partnership between Iran and al Qaeda in language that echoes the language bin Laden himself used to describe the relationship. Beginning in 2011, the Treasury Department, responsible for cutting off funds to terrorists and those who support them, issued a series of designations targeting senior al Qaeda personnel inside Iran. The designations were based, in part, on the intelligence found in bin Laden’s Abbottabad home. In the Treasury designations, the U.S. government speaks of “an agreement between al Qaeda and the Iranian government” that allowed senior al Qaeda officials “to travel in and out of Iran with the permission of Iranian officials.” Another Treasury designation says that Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security “facilitated the movement of al Qaeda operatives in Iran and provided them with documents, identification cards, and passports.” Another Treasury designation reported that “Iran continues to allow al Qaeda to operate a core pipeline that moves al Qaeda money and fighters through Iran to support al Qaeda activities in South Asia.”

In July 2011, Treasury designated an al Qaeda operative

known as Yasin al Suri. Treasury noted that Suri operates “under an agreement between al-Qa’ida and the Iranian government.” In October 2012, Treasury revealed for the first time the terms of the “agreement between al-Qa’ida and the Iranian government.” Al Qaeda “must refrain from conducting any operations within Iranian territory and recruiting operatives inside Iran while keeping Iranian authorities informed of their activities,” Treasury explained. “In return, the Government of Iran gave the Iran-based al-Qa’ida network freedom of operation and uninhibited ability to travel for extremists and their families.” If al Qaeda members “violate these terms” then they can be detained; otherwise they have the ability to roam free.

Al Qaeda operates inside Iran to this day. In July 2016, the Treasury Department designated three al Qaeda leaders who are stationed inside Iran. One of them, known as Abu Hamza al Khalidi, is al Qaeda’s “Military Commission Chief,” the equivalent of the group’s defense minister. He is described in a bin Laden memo as part of a “new generation” of leadership. While President Obama was claiming al Qaeda’s “core” was nearly dead, the organization was taking steps to make sure that men such as Khalidi fight on.

Sources tell THE WEEKLY STANDARD that documents further detailing the long relationship between Iran and al Qaeda are among the most important and explosive documents still being withheld from the American people.

During the 2016 presidential election, little was said about al Qaeda. The main reason for this is that more than 15 years after the 9/11 attacks, al Qaeda is still poorly understood. President Donald Trump’s administration has inherited the global war with the organization that struck America on September 11, 2001. In some ways, it is more difficult for al Qaeda to strike the United States today. But the organization has survived and adapted to the U.S.-led counterterrorism campaign. As a result, bin Laden’s successors have more fighters answering to them today than ever before.

President Obama attempted to unilaterally declare an end to the 9/11 wars. To justify their counterterrorism strategy, Obama and his advisers saw the enemy they wanted to see, not the one they were actually fighting. They routinely ignored the first rule of warfare: The enemy gets a vote. There’s no telling how many current intelligence assessments have Obama’s misunderstandings baked into them. The Trump administration will have to correct and replace any Obama-style analyses that outlive his presidency.

There is no better place to start than by releasing Osama bin Laden’s files. Al Qaeda is a more complex and sophisticated adversary than Obama believed. The American public deserves to know how the man who launched the 9/11 wars really saw the world. ♦



Kenneth Clark at home (1969)

Of Arts and the Man

How ‘Civilisation’ saved civilization. BY TRACY LEE SIMMONS

Back when the Apollo astronauts were feted as heroes for pushing out into other worlds, a hero of another breed landed in Washington to be recognized for his high service to this one. Sir Kenneth Clark (1903-1983), the eminent British art historian, was invited to the National Gallery to accept a medal for Distinguished Service to Education in Art. The medal was not a surprise. The frenzied throngs who shattered the serenity of those stately halls to welcome him, though, were: “For God’s sake, don’t go in through the front door,” the new

Kenneth Clark
Life, Art, and Civilisation
by James Stourton
Knopf, 496 pp., \$35

director of the gallery, J. Carter Brown, warned Clark before he arrived for the event. “You’ll be mobbed.”

Before making his remarks to what he had thought might be an appreciative klatsch of art devotees and Washington socialites, Clark, a genially private man, was made to walk the entire length of the gallery to thunderously reverberant cheers; by the time he reached the speaker’s platform, surprised and shaken, tears poured down his cheeks. At that moment, he later wrote, he felt

like nothing so much as “some visitor to a plague-stricken country who has been mistaken for a doctor.” It was a strange kind of tribute to come to such a man at such a time.

The excitement hadn’t been sparked by the fame Clark had garnered from the armload of well-received books on art he had penned over the previous 45 years, nor could it be credited to his having been the youngest man ever appointed director of the National Gallery in London, in 1933, who later helped to save its collection of paintings and artifacts from the Luftwaffe by having it all carted off to a cave in Wales for the duration of the war. The capacity crowd packed the halls that day to see the man who had written and hosted, to that date, the most

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unexpectedly popular series on culture in the annals of television: *Civilisation: A Personal View*, a set of programs produced by the BBC for a British audience in the late 1960s but which had, by happenstance, also been shown in America over the fledgling Public Broadcasting Service.

The subject of the series, ostensibly, had been the history of Western art; but the public reaction could not be explained by any native enthusiasm for art in the United States. Clark had unwittingly tapped into dark, furtive fears of the day that the social fabric of civilized life in the West was being rent asunder by endless war, random violence, moral decadence, and the ennui that can seep into any social order achieving a fuller measure of material prosperity. Many beyond the dyspeptic hell-in-a-handbasket crowd and happily inhaling hippies wondered if their children might be doomed to live in a lesser, more dangerous, world than the one in which they had been raised. Was it worthwhile to carry on? What had history to teach a jaded generation but the lesson that history had few lessons to teach?

Now, from a tweedy avuncular figure more at home in a country house than squinting in the limelight of celebrity, came a sudden shaft of hope.

James Stourton spends the ample length of this biography tracing the stream of Clark's ideals and persuasive powers, and reveals a man who was not an obvious candidate for apostle to the people. His life was lived on a higher plane, at once intellectually arduous and socially expansive. Born as an only child to a newly rich mercantile family that had made its fortune in textiles, young Clark had had the run of their several large houses (one of them in the south of France) and first sensed his devotion to the created image when he took up the hobby of rearranging the paintings hung along their walls. As a schoolboy he had nursed hopes that he might, himself, become an artist someday; but finding only competence, and no genius, he resolved to dedicate his life to the preservation of the works of geniuses past.

While Stourton adds relatively little

to the information that Clark himself divulged in the two volumes of his memoirs, one gains by seeing the mass of material placed in a different, more neutral setting—a metaphor Clark might have appreciated—and finding Clark's versions of certain events more roundly examined and, in the case of a few stray facts, corrected.

From Winchester College he went on to read history at Trinity College, Oxford, where his time coincided exactly with the undergraduate days of Graham Greene and Evelyn

Kenneth Clark wasn't telegenic, and he didn't bounce all over the set assuming he was speaking to antsy fools requiring constant stimulation. He remains the ultimate adult in the room, perhaps the last art critic who could use the word 'vulgarity' with conviction.

Waugh, neither of whom he seems to have known well. (One cannot help imagining Clark walking into their fictional pages and engaging in conversation with Charles Ryder, a fellow artist whom he probably would have liked, and the hyper-aesthete Anthony Blanche, whom he probably wouldn't have.) This was the *Brideshead* generation, too young to have fought in the Great War but destined to set new tones in literature and culture over subsequent decades.

The Oxford of this period was a conversable world; essential things were to be tossed about over drinks and bowls of tobacco when reading for the week's essay could wait—and often when it could not. It was here that Clark took

on friendships, such as that with the future warden of Wadham College, Maurice Bowra, which would last without interruption until the end of their lives. Here Clark learned to articulate ideas, to make them live in words apprehensible to others. He developed tact. He learned the civilized art of what has been called “expressing assent and dissent in graduated terms.” He learned, in a word, subtlety.

It was also here that he took in the works of John Ruskin and Walter Pater, both great influences. All told, he seemed to get more work done there than many of his classmates, and it may have been Oxford where he learned the difference between creatively and dissipately wasted time. He became a man who filled his hours. Oxford also confirmed him in his choice of vocation.

During this period he traveled to Italy, a place of pilgrimage as Clark had decided that the Italian Renaissance was his period; and it was there, on an early visit to Florence, that he met and fell under the sway of Bernard Berenson, art expert par excellence, and dallied with the idea of staying on to help Berenson revise an earlier set of books. But the work, Clark decided, would be too tedious, and he longed for greater range.

Back in England, he was invited to become keeper of fine art at Oxford's Ashmolean Museum, but his tenure was cut short when he was unexpectedly invited to take on the directorship of the National Gallery. Simultaneously, he was courted by an acquaintance at Windsor Castle to take on the position of Surveyor of the King's Pictures, a demanding job Clark turned down because he didn't think he could do justice to both positions at the same time. (It took the gruff intervention of George V himself to persuade Clark to take up the post anyway, a moment hilariously recounted in his memoirs.) Clark became a man nicely linked, from a young age, to the upper reaches of British society.

By this time Clark had married Jane Martin, a young woman both fashionable and exceedingly intelligent, and together they presided over the years of (as her husband later called it) the

“Great Clark Boom.” They knew everyone, and everyone came to dinner. Owing to Clark’s independent income, he could afford to live in large houses with a staff to maintain them, prepare meals, and care for their three children. Through their doors, for these formal evenings, came the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Simpson, prime ministers—Ramsay MacDonald, Stanley Baldwin, Neville Chamberlain—members of the glitzy *beau monde*, including “Larry” Olivier and Vivien Leigh, Noël Coward and Arthur Rubinstein, writers like Max Beerbohm, H.G. Wells, Edith

into the state of fidelity in the Clark marriage and finds, especially during the tension of the war years, straying on both their parts.)

Still, it was art that Clark cared most about, not society. As 1939 loomed, he sensed what was about to happen to his country and, possibly, to the National Gallery. Believing that the world would be immeasurably impoverished if it were to lose artifacts attesting to human greatness, Clark arranged for the mass exodus of most of the gallery’s collection to safety in Wales with all the gusto of a general. Afterwards, he opted (at the

The 1940s and ’50s were enormously productive times for Clark, as he sat on one committee after another that sought to enhance life for the average Briton, including his participation with the National Theatre and in helping usher Great Britain into the age of television as a founder of the Independent Television Authority. Even more important, he wrote books, almost all of which are still in print—among them *The Gothic Revival*, *Landscape into Art*, *Leonardo Da Vinci*, *The Nude*, *Ruskin Today*, *Rembrandt and the Italian Renaissance*, *Looking at Pictures*, and later, *The Romantic Rebellion*—impressive not only for their meticulously sifted content but their felicity of style as well, for Clark wrote not as a scholar but as a writer determined to be read.

Had Kenneth Clark’s contributions to culture ended around 1965, his reputation as a public servant of the highest order would be secure. But they did not. The project that was to win Clark his greatest acclaim began over a lunch in September 1966: David Attenborough, the newly appointed controller of BBC Two, was searching for a vehicle to show off the potential for color television and asked Clark to mull over his proposal to have him host a set of programs on art. The idea was unpromisingly generic, but as Clark later recalled, Attenborough offhandedly uttered the word “civilization,” which set Clark to scratching down ideas on the back of his menu while his luncheon companions talked over coffee.

Clark almost took a pass on the proposal; but finally, and despite reservations, set to work on the scripts for a 13-part series.

Civilisation would take over two years, and many miles by air and van, to produce. Clark had initially preferred shooting his speaking segments in a studio while the crew would travel far and wide to film in the field. But fortunately, Michael Gill, the chief director brought on to the project, vetoed that idea and decided that Clark should traipse around the locations along with everyone else—an inspired call. The production, often over budget but always stalwartly



‘Saltwood Castle, Kent’ by George Lambert (1762), Kenneth Clark’s home after 1955

Wharton, and to top them off, Winston Churchill. Not to mention the great London hostesses Sibyl Colefax and Lady Cunard. If you didn’t know the Clarks, you might not have been worth knowing.

By most accounts, however, these evenings were marked not by snobishness but by easy good cheer, and only one with Clark’s exquisitely good manners would know how to navigate among the shoals of those egos. Conversation had to be kept lively, with no one allowed to commandeer the sparkling talk around the table. For Clark, as Stourton says, “terror of bores was only exceeded by the fear of becoming one.” (Not that Clark’s life and marriage were perfect: Stourton performs the task expected of all contemporary biographers of probing

prompting of Dame Myra Hess) to use the gallery space for daytime concerts to relax nerves and raise spirits during the Blitz, and no musician, famous or obscure, declined an invitation to perform for free. The National Gallery concerts proved to be immensely popular and mark an early effort by Clark to extend the blessing of art to as many people as possible.

The close of World War II brought an end to Clark’s days as director. He later claimed not to have been an especially effective leader, sometimes running afoul of gallery staff, and records are mixed. But Stourton treats Clark’s tenure generously, for his efforts in acquisition and improved techniques of preservation, and his championing of contemporary artists like Henry Moore, Graham Sutherland, and John Piper.

backed, was a happy, serendipitous blend of talents: crisp and evocative writing, brilliant techniques of filming seldom used in television at the time, superb programming of period music to complement images.

The series aired in Britain early in 1969 and stirred a kind of *frisson* now difficult to fathom. Some churches changed their evensong times to accommodate parishioners who wished to be home to watch each installment. Those with color televisions, still a small minority, held *Civilisation* parties. The series yielded a book that would sell 1.5 million copies. Eventually the fervor crossed the Atlantic, and although CBS turned down the series as one that would not interest Americans, it got picked up by PBS and found even greater fame here. Kenneth Clark may be the last art historian to have appeared on *Meet the Press*.

Does the series hold up? Probably better than anything akin to it. We can see now that Clark was the ideal man to remind us of the solid foundations on which we remain standing. He wasn't telegenic, and he didn't bounce all over the set assuming he was speaking to antsy fools requiring constant stimulation. He remains the ultimate adult in the room, perhaps the last art critic who could use the word "vulgarity" with conviction. He spoke simply as an informed, curious man with the tone of voice he used in a sitting room. He loved art, but never forgot what art was about, which is human beings. And although he was considered preeminent among art historians, he was more keen to evangelize for the Good, the True, and the Beautiful than to make scholarly inroads, or otherwise elevate himself on a par with his subjects.

Clark was always in a self-consciously subservient position in the face of great artistic accomplishment. He believed that while criticizing the past is the right of every thinking man and woman, we have a prior duty to try to understand before we judge, and that judgments made today ought to carry the heaviest burden of proof. He showed that we have a duty to approach the past sympathetically, not because crime and guilt don't reside

there but because the faculty of understanding is unlikely to kick in if not sparked by humility. He also believed that eras could be better summed up with individuals than by abstractions. This made him a target of academic ridicule, but Clark was a man too well educated to be bothered by the charge of popularizing. In an era of cultural strain and educational collapse, what greater service could anybody render than to point out anew what is, and has always been, worth knowing?

Stourton notes that Clark was a popularizer without being a popu-

list: He wished to help the untrained and uninitiated to grasp whatever was marked by goodness, wherever and however long ago it was created. In this way, he was closer both to artists and to the people for whom they created than he was to critics more eager to widen that gap than to close it. Thus did this man of elite sympathies—he did believe that some people and some things are superior to others—become, for a long moment worth remembering, an advocate for the common man and woman who yearned for something beyond their commonness. ♦



Good to Us

The sound of Otis Redding, pre-'Dock of the Bay.'

BY COLIN FLEMING

To set the scene of the man who was on the stage: It's early April 1966, and for three days, Otis Redding is in residence at Los Angeles's Whisky A Go Go. He is far from his Chitlin' Circuit base back in the South, playing a club that would be at the epicenter of rock's psychedelic movement, where Jefferson Airplane, Grateful Dead, and the Doors performed some of their most unhinged sets. Redding will be dead in less than two years, killed when his tour plane crashed. Here at the Whisky A Go Go, he is 24.

Unlike jazz, rock tends to be stingy with its archival releases. That is, we may get a live album, scooped together from a run of performances or featuring one concert. But it's rare that a release like this package hits the market, where an entire residency of shows is documented.

At the time, sets were the norm: Someone like Otis Redding came out and played a truncated first program,

Otis Redding
Live at the Whisky A Go Go: The Complete Recordings
Concord, 6 CDs, \$59.99



Otis Redding

followed by a longer one a little later, and sometimes a third. The "house" would, for the most part, carry over—these L.A.-based music buffs were hard into live performance—and you could hear how a set list would change, how

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numbers would be handled differently, what adjustments the band might make, how a singer like Redding would choose to dish out his energy from one set to the next.

The thinking was that no one could expend total energy across the whole of two performances. But Otis Redding, as we hear now, was not other people: “We’re going to do that song again to make sure we got it on tape,” he says during the second set on opening night (April 8), before an undertaking of “Good to Me”—which he and his band have already played twice. The aim was to get a single-disc, in-concert album from these gigs, in part because this was a listening crowd, rather than the frantic ones, typical of Redding shows. There is the usual call-and-response between singer and audience, but these people clearly want to hear what the singer can do.

Redding wrests meaning from the different versions of “Good to Me” by approaching the song in various ways: as a smoldering rhythm-and-blues number, a torch ballad, the expirate of a lover’s under-the-covers plea. It’s a more extemporaneous approach than you might associate with a soul singer, but it also acts as a reminder that Otis Redding was one of his decade’s finest singers, period. His range wasn’t extreme, but as Arthur Alexander was to rhythm-and-blues, Redding was to soul: a force of nature that nature itself would heed, with a rare ability to blend power and vulnerability.

He retools “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction,” which closes five of the seven sets. The Rolling Stones channeled their love of soul horns into an outsized guitar riff that sounded bigger and wilder than any guitar riff could be. Redding had his band encase the groove in the bass drum and bass guitar, with the horns serving (brilliantly) as the rhythm section. James Brown had this kind of gift for arranging, one not normally associated with Otis Redding. But when you hear him work here you realize that this was a peerless soul *auteur*. There are the stomping swingers—“Mr. Pitiful,” “These Arms of Mine”—but also multiple versions of a soul pastoral like “Just One More Day,” which mixes Red-

ding’s standard medium with elements of folk music.

Having famously remarked that Aretha Franklin took his song from him with her cover of “Respect,” here the composer serves up one corkscrewing version after another. Each take is so masterful, so rammed with breathless tension and release, that the performance becomes eva-

nescence—well, almost—for a spell. Indeed, it’s hard to believe that a powerhouse like Redding wouldn’t always keep going. Listening to him, you’re conscious of a musical force that’s more than a man with a band. You know it when you hear it—and you know it over and over again, in this collection, in that classic can’t-stop/won’t stop style. ♦



In My Solitude

Through the looking-glass with Henry David Thoreau.

BY DANNY HEITMAN

At his cabin near Walden Pond, Henry David Thoreau famously kept three chairs: “one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society.” Even when he sat alone, Thoreau contained multitudes. We know him best as the man who lived for two years in a hut in the woods, recording his experiment in simplicity in *Walden*, a seminal entry in what would become a thriving American genre, the self-help book.

Beyond his stature as the nation’s first decluttering expert, however, Thoreau (1817–1862) was a man of many angles. He lamented the speed and scale of the railroads, but liked that the train connected him with Harvard’s library. He celebrated solitude, but remained close to friends and family. He sniffed at newspapers as trivial distractions but drew on them as a social activist. Thoreau questioned the worth of commerce, but brought invaluable innovations to his family’s pencil business. He seemed an idler to many and wrote about the virtue of standing still, but he worked incredibly hard at his writing and endures as one of the world’s most

industrious and ambitious naturalists. Thoreau’s paradoxes fascinate some readers and frustrate others. Kathryn Schulz, in a controversial piece, cited some of Thoreau’s inconsistencies as evidence of what a pompous fraud he was. Donovan Hohn, rebutting her, pointed out that Thoreau’s contradictions instructively resonate with our own conflicted feelings about who we are, how much we want, and what we’re willing to pay for it.

A man who wrote as much as Thoreau was bound to reveal evolving opinions. His journal alone stretches to 14 volumes and some two million words. Few readers, even within his circle of ardent admirers, have tackled his entire oeuvre. Much of Thoreau’s legacy rests with earnest anthologists who extract bits of his prose into thematic collections, hoping a few bright shards will imply the larger whole. There are various distillations of his journal, a collection of his writings on education, even a whole book of Thoreau’s thoughts on water.

In his recent anthology—*Henry David Thoreau: Spiritual and Prophetic Writings* (Orbis, 224pp., \$22)—editor Tim Flinders drew on a selection of Thoreau’s letters, journal entries, essays, and books to capture his thinking about God and religion. His book was published by a house run by the

Danny Heitman is the author of *A Summer of Birds: John James Audubon at Oakley House*.

Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, a liberal arm of the Roman Catholic church. Although Thoreau's message of simplicity chimes with the no-frills style of Pope Francis, the Sage of Walden wasn't Catholic himself. A product of deeply Protestant New England, Thoreau eschewed organized religion and claimed no church affiliation. He was a Transcendentalist, embracing the idea of a direct relationship with God through nature.

"When you knock," he told a friend, "ask to see God—none of the servants."

That friend was Harrison Otis Blake, a widower who had written to recruit Thoreau as a spiritual adviser. Thoreau demurred, admitting that he was still trying to work out this part of his life for himself. He told Blake that any advice would come from "faith and aspiration," not a mastery of the subject. Thoreau distrusted clerical authority, and he seemed reluctant to claim his own disciples or a firm set of religious beliefs. He was something of a dabbler, drawing on Western religious traditions, Eastern religions, and his intuition to discern the divine.

This kind of do-it-yourself theology would seem to have renewed appeal today, as more and more Americans choose (like Thoreau) to avoid religious affiliation altogether. According to a recent survey from the Pew Research Center, the number of Americans who claim to be affiliated with a religion has dropped from 83 percent in 2007 to 77 percent today. Thoreau's spiritual life, which drew on personal observation and reflection rather than congregational worship, seems like an attractive alternative to praying in a pew. If one can find God in a sunrise or a tree, why bother with a church, synagogue, or temple?

Flinders doesn't address that question directly. But in his introduction, he notes that Thoreau's self-guided spiritual odyssey led him to form some of the same insights already available within Catholicism. Touched by ecstatic states he couldn't understand, Thoreau apparently didn't know that Saint Augustine, Saint Teresa of Avila,



Site of Thoreau's cabin, Walden Pond

and Meister Eckhart had recorded similar experiences.

Had the sacred traditions of medieval Catholicism not been sealed off from him by the sectarianism and prejudices of nineteenth century Christian churches, he might have found his way to these vibrant contemplative traditions and the kindred souls who peopled them.

Thoreau's Walden interlude, conditioned by simple labor, apparent celibacy, and long stretches of solitude, had obvious parallels in ecclesiastical history: "Though Thoreau remained irreligious in his disposition," Flinders writes, "his routine unintentionally mirrored those of a vowed Catholic monastic—the seclusion sought by a Trappist monk in his cloister." And Thoreau's view of grace expressed through daily routine involved a sacramental sense of faith: "I do believe," he told Blake, "that the outward and the inward life correspond."

Flinders isn't the first person to suggest similarities between Thoreau's spiritual practices and those of the church of Rome. Andrew Delbanco made the case more directly several years ago in a perceptive essay, "Thoreau Faces Death." Confronting the prospect of mortality, Delbanco concludes, "Thoreau became what I would

call a secret Catholic—the pilgrim who discovers and takes refuge in what he judges to be the one durable church in which the spirit of God has consented to be realized in human form."

The title of Delbanco's essay makes clear that Thoreau knew what was at stake regarding questions about God. He'd been deeply shaken by the death of his brother John, and he lived in an age when the average life expectancy for an American male was less than 45 years. Thoreau, who would die at 44, knew that earthly life was often short, and this knowledge deeply shaped his writing. It's why the passages in *Walden* about how to spend time ring with such urgency.

Spiritual and Prophetic Writings contains parts of *Walden*, along with such widely anthologized essays as "Life Without Principle," "Civil Disobedience," and "Walking." There's nothing really new here, but Tim Flinders does a nice job of arranging some of Thoreau's iconic writings, like an artful line of dominoes, to create a sense of his spiritual progression. In "Walking," Thoreau mentions that the word "saunter" is derived from idle people who sought charity on the pretense of going "à la Saint Terre"—to the Holy Land—when they had no real intention of traveling that far.

Thoreau's sympathies are with such walkers who find revelation closer to home: "He is a sort of fourth estate," writes Thoreau, "outside of Church and State and People."

Thoreau seems to be arguing here for a kind of democratized spirituality—one available close at hand, without the meddlesome mediation of clerics and theologians. But we know, too, that Thoreau's Walden regimen was relatively

short-lived. He stayed there only two years, leaving for reasons he never fully explained. The pared-down disciplines he was trying to master were, quite possibly, easier to sustain within an equally committed community, which is why monks tend to live in groups—and why, we might reasonably infer, there's still value in exploring one's spirituality the old-fashioned way: with other people. ♦

tional food, Pringles potato chips. I try the blubber two ways—raw (jellied art gum eraser with slight fishy aftertaste) and fried (pencil eraser)—but pass on the muskox.

Igaliku's ruins include the house and church of the New World's first bishop (12th century). We get there on a tour boat that puts us ashore an hour's walk away. The tour includes a side trip that weaves through icebergs in a tributary fjord. Kim, the pilot, stops amid them and offers each adult a splash of vermouth chilled by chunks of glacial ice he scoops up with a fish net. For Greenlanders, English is at best a third language (Danish being the second) but Kim's is excellent. He says that he drives this boat for fun, and on return, will clock in at his day job, air-traffic control. I ask him to translate a text message on my Icelandic cell phone that details what Vodafone will charge me for using it in Greenland. The free translation—"Bend over and smile"—shows that his English is not just good but idiomatic.

From Igaliku we take a speedboat up and across Tunulliarfik Fjord to a dock consisting of piled-up boulders and stumble across them to begin a short backpack to the middle of nowhere, which even that part of Greenland not under ice mostly is. We intended to follow a marked trail along a valley, but a crucial bridge has been washed out. We will have to travel crosscountry, using a pass 2,000 feet above us to get over the ridge we'd planned to go around. Bleating sheep soon let us know that we're not alone. That's fortunate: They've made game trails we can use to get through thick brush of gray-leaf willow.

As we pick our way down a steep gully on the far side of the pass, the view is striking at every scale of size and distance. On top of the world broods the distant, Alaska-sized icecap. Five miles to our west, the huge Eqalorutsit glacier scours the cliffs of its surrounding fjord. The stream we're following is punctuated by charming waterfalls. Beneath our feet lies an astonishing profusion of delicately detailed mosses and lichens, already starting to show fall colors. There are no trees.



Room at the Top

Notes from a very northern voyage of (self-)discovery.

BY DAVID GUASPARI

Narsarsuaq, Greenland
The multilingual safety card at the Hotel Narsarsuaq let me deduce that the Greenlandic word for fire must be IKUALLATTOQARTILLUGU, and is unusual only for having such a low percentage of Qs. Which concluded my study of the language. The hotel is a repurposed barracks from Bluie West One, a World War II airfield built by the U.S. Army on a glacial flat far up the Tunulliarfik Fjord. The airfield now serves as the transportation hub of southern Greenland, and the town of Narsarsuaq (pop. 160) exists to run it.

Flights approaching from the east cross a vast icecap, exceeded only by Antarctica's. Its white and black landscape is mesmerizing. Jagged mountain peaks poke through the surface of a sea of ice two miles thick. Glacial tongues, cracked and twisted, creep down deep fjords to the sea. The Kiatuut Sermiaq glacier points the way to Narsarsuaq and sheds the icebergs floating just past the end of the runway. This is going to be good.

As was promised by my friend when he organized the trip. In love with remote places, he's guided outdoor

excursions on every continent. But our plans are not ambitious, mostly day hikes from two tiny settlements—Igaliku (pop. 27) and Qassiarsuk (pop. 50)—for the scenery and Viking ruins. Sheep farming, the main occupation in both, sets the rules for visitors: Keep off the grass, which will be winter feed; don't pet the sheepdogs, who have jobs. The dogs watch us intently, as if a loop is running nonstop in their brains: What's that, where does it belong, how do I get it there?

Qassiarsuk is where Erik the Red spent his exile from Iceland and hatched his legendary real estate scam to exploit the appeal of a land allegedly green to residents of one demonstrably icy. His wife was a Christian convert, and the footprint of her chapel, the first Christian church in North America, is still visible. It's been reconstructed nearby, along with a sodcovered Viking long house. (Ole, who's mowing the roof when we visit, turns out to have been an exchange student in Rochester, New York.)

The settlements are resupplied every other week—by boat when the fjord is navigable, by helicopter in winter. Each has a small general store. A sample of the shelves in Igaliku: whale blubber, horseshoes, Red Bull, canned muskox pâté, and the truly interna-

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We use the prolonged arctic twilight to pitch tents and make dinner on a knob not far from the gully's mouth. Next morning, we hike to a sheepherders' shelter on a plain near the glacier, which regularly calves icebergs with thunderous booms. We're back in camp well before dusk. The wind calms and the sky clears. Around midnight, a curtain of northern lights shimmers overhead. I can't see my companions but hear them whoop at every subtle flash of color.

This visit to a microscopic slice of Greenland followed 10 days in the south and west of Iceland. Iceland claims to have, per capita, more writers, more books published, and more books read than anyplace else in the world. That seemed plausible: Many roadside stops had take-one/leave-one tables for swapping books. We spent a night at a hostel that put novels on the bedroom shelves. Along our route occur episodes from two of the most famous Icelandic sagas, Njál's (also called *The Story of Burnt Njál*) and Egil's. *Egil's Saga*, which I read for homework, begins in Norway with his grandfather and ends in Iceland with his son. It is a novel-length compendium of genealogy, political intrigue, inheritance feuds, poetry, raiding, and drinking (and throwing up). Also nicknames, the best belonging to Eyvind the Plagiarist.

The Icelandic language has barely changed since the Middle Ages—leaving its alphabet in a scary place, with letters like Æ, ð, and þ. Native speakers can therefore read the sagas, their national epics, without translation or gloss. Since, essentially, the *only* speakers of Icelandic are natives, everyone needs a second language. That, fortunately, is English. So getting around is easy.

The interior of Iceland is forbiddingly wild, if not as extreme as Greenland's. To mountains and glaciers, Iceland adds spectacular waterfalls, as well as volcanoes and their progeny: lava fields, hot springs, geysers, boiling mud. (The ur-geyser named Geysir, the first ever seen by Europeans, now erupts rarely, often after earthquakes.) Our "camps" in Iceland were snug cab-

ins, reached not by boat but by rented SUV. This required frequent fording of glacial streams—*slowly*, so as not to send waves into the air intake, but *slowly forward*, with the current pushing sideways and the wheels slithering about in the stream beds' deep gravel. Those were fun, in retrospect. We envied the operators of vehicular monsters that belonged in a *Terminator* movie, some with snorkels and one with a chassis raised so high that stepladders were needed to get in and out.

thick springy carpets that made them seem alive, or at least formerly so. Roads cut through gnarly lava fields looked like huge plates of entrails. We hiked a small valley that could have been the background for a children's cartoon, its hills looking like soft stacks of pillows or giant cow flops.

We passed through Reykjavik, Iceland's only real city, three times. I'd imagined a place full of chilly Hitchcock blondes. Not so—though many women, it was clear, took their eyebrows very



A mountain pass on the way to Eqalorutsit glacier, Greenland

The south coast is the wettest part of Iceland. Forecasts repeatedly promised "three fair days" to come, but rain fell on every one of them. That didn't stop our hiking and climbing everything we planned to, but it did require much donning and doffing of rain gear, and one lunchtime spent eating Pringles in the shelter of a cave.

Iceland also offers beauty less austere than mountains and lava and ice. There are lovely walks along the coast, kittiwakes nesting in the cliffs; there are scenic villages with houses in bright primary colors; the afternoon light often seems as crisp as light in the morning. And who knew there were so many shades of green? There were lush moss-covered rock formations with

seriously. Reykjavik has a population somewhat smaller than that of Syracuse, New York, but is a more happening place. On weekend nights, it happens—loudly—until about four in the morning. Drinking in Iceland is said to be "goal-oriented." (On one hotel's breakfast buffet I noticed a flask of amber liquid next to a stack of shot glasses. It turned out to be not hair-of-the-dog but cod liver oil.) Our last visit was a quick pivot, a few hours' sleep between an evening flight from Narsarsuaq and a morning flight to New York.

Reentry was disorienting. Space folded on itself, attaching the steep ridge in front of Kiattut Sermiak glacier to a Shake Shack at JFK. Time became reorganized in a different way,

from a sense of its passing at many different rates simultaneously: glaciers and volcanoes evolving in deep geological time; voyages of discovery and settlement occurring at the pace of human history; the poignant wartime snapshots in Narsarsuaq's museum displaying time as memory reconstructs it—fragmentary, personal, destined to fade.

In the Shake Shack, waiting for my connection, time is what I was killing. But at home it resumed the expected speed—as did I, with a stride that had acquired a hint of swagger, a slight roll thanks to weeks spent treading rough ground. I roamed my neighborhood of 30 years like an explorer. Home felt familiar but newfound. That's why we travel. ♦

BEA

Getting and Spending

Two cheers for materialism—and a new stove.

BY STEPHEN MILLER

William Wordsworth is a great English poet, but one poem he wrote irritates me. It's the sonnet that begins: *The world is too much with us; late and soon, / Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.* I beg to differ. There's nothing wrong with getting and spending so long as you don't do it 24/7.

I'm retired, so my getting days are over except for the money I make from writing. I am not much of a spender, but recently my wife and I had a spending bash: We renovated our kitchen to the tune of 20,000 bucks. The money came from taking out a new mortgage. This spending did not lay waste my powers; far from it. It gave me a new power, the power to cook. We replaced our wretched electric stove with a superb gas one, something I'd wanted for a long time. I do most of the cooking in our house and I hated cooking on an electric stove. Have you ever tried to simmer something on an electric stove? It doesn't work.

The renovation was my wife's idea. She disliked our kitchen cabinets with

their fake wood veneer. Since she was determined to go ahead with the project, I countered with my own wish list: a gas stove, granite countertops, and a new refrigerator and dishwasher (the current ones were 10 years old). The stove would be easy to install because we have a gas line to the house; our heating system and water heater run on gas. Three months later the renovation was completed.

In his inaugural address in 1989, the elder George Bush asked, "Are we enthralled by material things?"—his point being that Americans are not enthralled by material things despite the widespread assumption among Europeans that Americans are mired in materialism. I'm not enthralled by my new stove, but I am mighty pleased. In the morning I feel a slight rush of pleasure when I turn on the gas and see the bright blue flame that is going to cook my scrambled egg.

I don't think I'm making too much of my new acquisition. According to Samuel Johnson, "the greater part of our time passes in compliance with necessities, in the performance of daily duties, in the removal of small inconveniences, *in the procurement of petty pleasures* italics mine]." Doctor Johnson thinks there is nothing wrong with petty pleasures, provided they are harmless. My petty pleas-

ure is cooking on my new gas stove.

I've never met a person who was totally indifferent to material things, yet intellectuals on the left and right frequently rail against materialism. In a recent *Times Literary Supplement* a reviewer quotes an author who argues that Western civilization is in bad shape because we spend "the better parts of our lives" pursuing "the material gratifications of a hedonic society." I'm willing to bet that the smug author of those remarks has not spurned material gratifications. I'm sure he has enjoyed a new acquisition—a computer, a car, a coffeemaker ... maybe even a new stove.

About a century ago the English socialist R.H. Tawney wrote a silly book entitled *The Acquisitive Society*. You don't have to read it to know what he said: Capitalism makes people greedy for products they don't really need—and so on and so on. Who on this planet is *not* acquisitive—except for monks and (maybe) nomads? When I was working for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in the 1980s, I learned that many people living under Communist regimes were willing to pay a month's salary for a pair of Levis.

Attacking materialism—aka consumerism—is the stock-in-trade of intellectuals. In *Consuming Passions* (1999), a collection of essays about the evils of consumerism, Roger Rosenblatt says that "ordinary citizens are becoming like the big spenders of the past, going on near-desperate hunts for new stuff to buy and to long for." Who are these frenetic ordinary citizens? I've never met one. Another writer, a professor at Oberlin, pontificates: "The problem is that we don't often see the true ugliness of the consumer economy." Does he live in a hut in the woods, grow his own food, and cook in a fireplace? I doubt it.

Writers often sing the praises of alcohol, yet some people who drink become alcoholics. Why attack consumerism when only a small percentage of people are immoderate consumers? So I say, give two cheers for materialism and consumerism. These isms don't lay waste my powers, or yours. ♦

Stephen Miller is the author, most recently, of *Walking New York: Reflections of American Writers from Walt Whitman to Teju Cole*.

Potted Kroc

A story of dynamism is slowed down for effect.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

There is a great American novel almost nobody has read: Theodore Dreiser's *The Titan*. It concerns a visionary man of business named Frank Cowperwood, and it's the story of how he helps turn Chicago into a major city by commandeering and then building its mass-transit system. Cowperwood is a sensualist and a romantic; he is driven not by greed but rather by something more elemental. Dreiser makes it clear that business is an artistic endeavor for Cowperwood, a means of expressing his creativity—only he requires a canvas made up of city streets and materials drawn from banks and investors, and he does great harm even as he does great things.

It is an extraordinary book about both the irrepressible vitality and the break-the-china sloppiness of capitalists, damaged only by Dreiser's customarily clunky prose and the fact that Ayn Rand vulgarized it beyond belief as she fashioned *The Fountainhead* and stole its thunder. But it's become an also-ran in the annals of American literature because it is a book whose subject is the creativity of capitalism.

The Founder, a new movie about how an efficient system devised by two brothers at a California hamburger stand made fast food the daily bread of the world, could have been *The Titan* of our age. The story of how the middle-aged salesman Ray Kroc came upon the McDonald's in San Bernardino in 1954 and saw the future in it—and how he came to wrest control of the business from the stiff-necked brothers who did not want to compromise on quality—is a dynamic and fascinating one.

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, is THE WEEKLY STANDARD's movie critic.

The Founder

Directed by John Lee Hancock



Michael Keaton plays Kroc as a cock-of-the-walk banty rooster whose power-of-positive-thinking patter barely masks an existential desperation to make it big even as time is running out on him. The year is 1954, and Kroc is trying and failing to sell a machine that makes milkshakes five at a time to ill-kempt and badly managed drive-ins and diners. Then an order comes in for eight of the machines—all at once, for one establishment. On a whim, he drives from St. Louis to California and sees the original McDonald's at work. The place is a well-oiled machine, and Kroc is so impressed he gets the brothers McDonald to share with him the tale of their painstaking development of the kitchen system that allows them to serve up a hamburger to a customer in just 30 seconds.

Kroc asks them to allow him to franchise the McDonald's model. They resist; they tried doing it themselves, but were embarrassed by the franchises they allowed and how the quality didn't stack up. Kroc promises he will do it differently, and they make a deal. As the franchising system prospers, however, Kroc himself runs into severe financial problems; he isn't making enough money from his 1.9 percent of each stand's proceeds to help the company grow, and the brothers won't renegotiate the deal.

The Founder centers on a typically galvanizing performance by Keaton, whose eyes alone have more charge to them than the Indian Point nuclear plant. But the movie denies itself Keaton's elec-

tricity in its own storytelling. It's about a midcentury human dynamo who steamrolls his way to glory, but the film is not dynamic in the least. It's shockingly dull. Screenwriter Robert Siegel and director John Lee Hancock want us to know that what Ray Kroc did to the McDonald brothers was not nice, and so they do what they can to keep their movie from being complicit with his scheming. In so doing they flatten out the proceedings. The cinematography looks like stale Kodachrome photos fading to black and white. The music on the soundtrack has no vigor. Most of the scenes are shot in shadow. It's dreary to look at, and that appears to be a deliberate decision.

The movie splits Dreiser's Cowperwood in two. The McDonald brothers are the creative capitalists who design a new way to serve food in a feat of passion and engineering. Kroc is the crook who makes it all happen. For Siegel and Hancock, the McDonald boys are paragons of virtue while Kroc is a desperate dreamer who turns entirely amoral in pursuit of his aims. He buys them out for \$2.7 million—or around \$22 million in today's dollars. The movie portrays this as a monstrous human tragedy. Come on. They got immensely rich off a well-run hamburger stand, and if they had been left to their own devices, nothing would have happened.

Indeed, in his book *The Fifties*, David Halberstam quotes Richard McDonald saying that if he had ended up the head of the McDonald's Corporation, "I would have wound up in some skyscraper somewhere with about four ulcers and eight tax attorneys trying to figure out how to pay all my income tax."

What really irked the McDonalds was Kroc trying to take credit for their inspiration by calling himself "the founder" of McDonald's. They had a point, and the movie follows the example of the McDonald's Corporation itself following Kroc's death in setting the record straight.

That's not a lot to hang a movie on, and *The Founder* fails because it doesn't appreciate the complex accomplishments of the character who occupies nearly every second of its screen time. ♦

"In a remarkable reversal of fortune, the nation's largest cities have become magnets for money, innovation and young professionals, while its small towns and farms have become poorer, older, sicker and more resentful of urban elites. Jose [DelReal] will bring his powerful storytelling to this important subject. . ."

PARODY

—“The Washington Post announces expanded America desk reporting team,” washingtonpost.com, December 16, 2016

In a rural Virginia enclave, sickness and resentment

ISOLATION IN THE SHADOW OF THE INTERSTATE

Digging for change in car seats to pay for a Value Meal

BY JOSE UNREAL

HANOVER, Va.— “Range is clear!”

Jimmy Shiflett lays the Bushmaster AR-15—the same make of rifle Adam Lanza used to murder 26 people at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012—down on the plywood-covered bench and coughs into a soiled handkerchief, then peeks discreetly at the results before stuffing the handkerchief back into the pocket of his Carhartt overalls.

“Maw-maw says to get to the doctor,” he rasps. “But since we lost the Obamacare, there ain’t no money for that.”

These are hard times for the people of Hanover, Virginia. The rural enclave sits just an hour’s drive from suburban Washington—home to six of the richest 10 counties in the United States. Yet to Shiflett, who lives with his 19 siblings and their maternal grandmother in a dented mobile home, Northern Virginia might as well be the moon.

He has never seen “Troilus and Cressida” at the Lansburgh. He



On January 1, Hanover, Virginia, 12-year-old Judd McKee rings in the new year with the secondhand AR-15 that he got for Christmas.

has never tasted the *foie de veau à l'échalote* at La Chaumière. He has never, in fact, been to the Smithsonian (not even the Air and Space Museum).

“Why I need them fancy things for?” Shiflett asks as he takes out a crumpled pack of Marlboro cigarettes and a camouflage lighter. “I got DISH TV.”

“Damn straight,” says a tall man in a Confederate-flag T-shirt standing nearby.

The weekend warriors here at the Black Hawk Shooting Range are largely poor, uneducated, and easy to command, and they are of one mind on many subjects. Such group polarization is reinforced by their strong kinship system: Everyone here seems to be related—sometimes distantly,

but usually not—to everyone else.

Shiflett takes the empty “clip” from his machine gun and starts to put more bullets in the barrel. They gleam wickedly in the afternoon sunlight. The totems of battle are precious to these people, for whom warfare—against Muslims, invading Mexicans, “gun-grabbers,” and other out-groups—is a constant peril that permeates their perceptions of daily life and intensifies their felt need for security. In vague but ominous terms, they speak of a looming danger that threatens their homes, their womenfolk, and their way of life, and they believe they are the only thing standing between them and

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